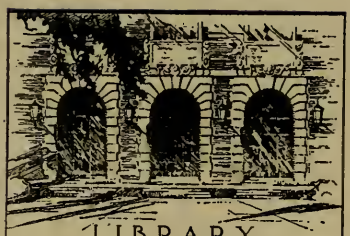

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ROMANCE

OF

THE PYRENEES.

VOL. III.

ROMANCE

OF

THE PYRENEES.

IN

FOUR VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF SANTO SEBASTIANO, A NOVEL.

THIRD EDITION.

VOL. III.

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ROMANCE

OF THE

PYRENEES.

CHAP. I.

In this ſtate of almoſt utter inſenſibility Victoria continued until about midnight, when ſhe was aroufed to perception by hearing her own name ſeveral times ſoftly repeated in a voice that at once awakened her ſhattered faculties to ſuperſtitious horror. With difficulty, from exceſſive tremor, ſhe raiſed herſelf upon her elbow to learn from whence the voice proceeded; when, obſerving the figure of a man ſtanding at a reſpectful diſtance, ſhe ſhuddering exclaimed—

"The ſhade of poor Diego come to warn me of my fate!"

"Come to ſave you from a dreadful one," ſaid he, gently approaching. "Dare lady Victoria venture with me upon a bold enterpriſe?"

She took his hand, and with difficulty ſuppreſſed a ſcream of joy. "It is Diego's ſelf! —Merciful Heaven, I thank thee!"

"Dare you venture with me through that window, lady Victoria? There is a boat lying-to beneath it to receive us, and convey you to a place of ſafety; but we muſt be ſpeedy."

Victoria attempted to riſe, then ſuddenly ſtopped. "Will my doing ſo expoſe Hippolyto and his brave companions to greater evils?" ſaid ſhe.

"No, lady Victoria, it will extricate them from every threatened danger, ſince it is to them I will convey you; and with them, I truſt, we ſhall eſcape from your ruthleſs perſecutors."

Joy and hope darted a renovation of ſpirit, health, ſtrength, and activity, through Victoria's mind and frame. Aſſiſted by Diego ſhe bounded from her birth, and without noiſe or difficulty followed him through one

of the cabin windows, and from the ſtern gallery eaſily deſcended into a boat, where another man was, who, to her great ſatisfaction, ſhe quickly diſcovered to be Thomas; but, obſerving they wiſhed for ſilence, ſhe forbore to aſk any of thoſe queſtions ſhe panted to have anſwered.

Cautiouſly, but rapidly, they plied their oars, and in a few moments ſhe found herſelf cloſe to the brigantine ſhe had left the caſtle in. Inſtantly ſhe was hoiſted upon deck, where ſhe was received by Pedro and ſeveral of the ſeamen with every demonſtration of pleaſure. She was placed by them in a chair upon the deck, when the feelings of joy and gratitude which agitated her ſuſceptible heart forced tears in torrents from her eyes.

All was inſtantly in commotion; the ſails were ſoon unfurled, and in a few moments more the veſſel was making conſiderable way. Victoria looked anxiouſly around; but not perceiving the object of her ſolicitude, at length aſked Pedro where and how Hippolyto was?

"The wound in his arm," Pedro replied, "is of little conſequence; but he has ſuf-

fered ſo much mental anguiſh on your account, that I would not permit the generous brave Diego's gallant achievement and anxious enterpriſe relative to you to be mentioned to him, ſo fearful was I of raiſing a hope that might be cruelly diſappointed: but Diego has happily completed his daring and glorious project, and I will no longer delay giving joy and liberty to the gallant Hippolyto, who was fettered in the cabin, whilſt all the reſt of us were ſtowed and ironed in the hold."

Pedro now diſappeared, and in a moment after Hippolyto was at the feet of our heroine: but joy and amazement had deprived him of the power of utterance, and he panted for words to ſpeak his raptures. Victoria ſweetly expreſſed her pleaſure at their thus happily meeting, and tenderly deplored the wound he had received, which now confined his left arm in a ſling. The ſound of her voice, which he for ſome hours thought would never more charm his ear, increaſed his tranſports, but not his power of articulation; and almoſt ſubdued by the poignancy of his feelings, he leaned his head

againſt the ſeat occupied by Victoria, who, alarmed at his ſituation, requeſted Pedro to give him ſomething to compoſe his agitation. Pedro complied; and, with a view of giving time to Hippolyto's mind to recover its native tone, requeſted Diego to inform them how he had contrived and managed the perilous and glorious attempt of liberating them.

"I have nothing to relate, ſignior Pedro," Diego modeſtly replied, "but that I am happy in finding Heaven has kindly deigned to proſper the firſt effort of virtue in a repentant ſinner."

"My good Diego," ſaid Victoria with that faſcinating ſweetneſs of voice and manner peculiar to her, "you will not, I am perſuaded, refuſe to gratify my eager wiſh of learning by what miracle you, who ſo ſhort a period ſince was confined by illneſs to your bed, got into that ſhip your humanity and friendſhip have juſt releaſed me from?"

"Your wiſhes, lady Victoria," he replied, reſpectfully bowing, "are commands to me which I ſhall ever willingly obey; and in my little narrative lady Victoria will pleaſe to re-

member that ſhe is the daughter of my dear lamented lord, to whoſe memory I owe a debt of gratitude that with my life I would freely pay: that I, wretch as I am, aſſiſted to involve her, the child of my benefactor, in her——"

"Diego, on to your narrative: no further preface I beſeech you. If ever you loved my father, diſtreſs not his child by ſuch reflexions upon a friend he regarded."

"Loved your father! Ah, lady Victoria! —But your command is that I ſhould haſten to my narrative, and I obey.

"In a very ſhort time after the unexpected arreſt of ſignior Pedro in my chamber, my bed was ſurrounded by Don Manuel and ſeveral of my comrades. My maſter commanded me to ſilence, while his attendants, ſeizing my bedding, conveyed me, as I lay in it, out of the caſtle into that veſſel we have juſt quitted, where I was commodiouſly placed in one of the beſt births. Don Manuel himſelf accompanied us; and, in ſpite of the interdict, I broke ſilence, to plead for my dear ſuffering lady, when Don Manuel bade me not fear for her, ſince for

worlds he would not injure her; but his word was given to a friend, to aſſiſt in urging her into a meaſure that would ultimately redound to her advantage.' He further added, 'that he had me removed from the caſtle to be out of the way of interfering, as he learned from Alonzo I was likely to do, and alſo to be out of the way of thoſe, who might injure me for that interference.'

"All the medicines which ſignior Pedro had prepared for me were taken with me; and one of my comrades, Felix, was ordered by my maſter to take care of and attend me; and when Don Manuel bade me good night, he deſired me not to fear for lady Victoria or myſelf, ſince he would protect both from every real evil: and grieved to the ſoul was I that I could not esteem the man who was kind to me.

"Felix continued with me, and paid me every poſſible attention; and as my dreadful alarms upon my lady's account had been allayed by Don Manuel's ſolemn aſſurances—who, although ſo criminal in many inſtances, I never knew to forfeit his word—the violence of my indiſpoſition almoſt immediately

ſubſided; and by morning, although weak and dejected, I was able to leave my birth and take my ſtation upon the main-maſt head, with my eyes invariably fixed upon the caſtle terrace, in hopes of catching a glimpſe of lady Victoria, that I might be convinced of her ſafety: but I ſaw her not; and the only comfort I had was in teaching Felix to pity her.

"It is unneceſſary for me to tell all the inquietude of uncertainty I experienced: and it is impoſſible for me to deſcribe my feelings when, in the middle of the night before laſt, the bark I was in was ſuddenly manned and put to ſea in queſt of my poor lady. I ſuppoſed, in the general hurry and confuſion, that my being in that veſſel was forgotten, as I conſidered it ſtrange policy to take a known well-wiſher to the fugitives in chace of them; and I looked upon the circumſtance as an auſpicious omen, and thanked Providence for it. I was not miſtaken in my conjecture.—But when Garcias found I was on board, he ſeemed more pleaſed than otherwiſe; for my being an avowed enemy of Alonzo's recommended me to his favour; and by a ſtrange

infatuation, he believed that I had oppoſed Alonzo's vile attempt ſolely to do my duty by Don Manuel.

"As I knew not who beſide ſignior Hippolyto were the companions of my lady's flight, I could form no conjecture of what port you were likely to make for; and every knot we advanced appalled my heart, leſt we ſhould be gaining upon you, which we were but too likely to do if we were in the ſame courſe, as the caravel we were in was by far the ſwifteſt ſailer in Don Manuel's poſſeſſion. At length the gale aroſe, and, as I am conſidered to have ſome ſhare of maritime knowledge, Garcias found full employment for me; but perhaps you will ſcarcely credit me, when I ſay that I did not exert myſelf ſo much as I might have done, hoping that our diſtreſs would at leaſt gain time for you.

"The calm ſucceeded, and I vainly hoped that, as you had ſailed an hour or two before us, you had, notwithſtanding the ſuperior ſwiftneſs of our veſſel, got ſo far a-head as to be out of our reach; but in that I was fatally deceived. I cannot deſcribe the agony, the diſtraction of my mind during the en-

gagement. Every gun we fired ſhot my heart through and through. But what could I do, ſeparated from you? Felix and I were ſtationed to the ſame gun: need I ſay that gun was never fired? but at laſt I left Felix to his inactive ſtation, and flew upon deck, to ſee how matters were likely to end. I beheld ſignior Hippolyto's glorious conduct, and when Garcias boarded you I followed him.

"The evening was cloſing in, and, as our dreſſes were uniform, it was ſcarcely poſſible to diſtinguiſh friends from foes; but I inſtantly joined the ſide I favoured. We could not hope to conquer ſuch a ſuperior force as that againſt us; but I believe it was the univerſal intention to yield liberty and life together. However my lady Victoria ſoon terminated the deſperate conteſt. I ſaw her not until I beheld her falling into the arms of Garcias. My ſword dropped from my hand in this moment of terror and amazement, and I ſilently followed Garcias, who inſtantly bore my poor inſenſible lady to the cabin in his veſſel, where he left her to the care of ſurgeon Sancho de Gambo, and ordered me

to accompany him to the brigantine; when I found my being a traitor was yet undiſcovered, and learned that, upon ſight of lady Victoria, ſignior Hippolyto loſt all ſelf-poſſeſſion and became an eaſy priſoner. Garcias now ordered ſignior Pedro to be expeditious in dreſſing the wounds of his companions, whoſe deaths he choſe to be himſelf the cruel perpetrator of, in vengeance for their apoſtaſy; and when the ſurgical buſineſs was completed, the wretch had ſignior Hippolyto ſtrongly fettered in the cabin, and ſignior Pedro, with the reſt of the priſoners, ironed in the hold. All this he ſaw executed himſelf, increaſing their miſery by threats and inſults. By his command I attended him, when the only good I could do was to purloin a large quantity of laudanum from ſignior Pedro's ſtores.

"On my return to the caravel, Garcias ordered me to aſſiſt the cook in preparing ſupper—a matter which, from his voluptuous diſpoſition, I foreſaw; and, in obeying him, I took care to infuſe a great portion of the laudanum among the food intended for Garcias and the ſhip's company's ſupper, while

into the drink I took different opportunities of throwing the reſt; and whilſt I attended Garcias at ſupper, I ſaw him and his aſſociates, Sancho, Ramirez, and Fernandez, eat voraciouſly, and drink in proportion. I now wonder my agitation, leſt the ſurgeon ſhould diſcover the taſte of the drug, did not betray me; but Garcias ſeemed governed the whole evening by infatuation, for he miſtook my trepidation for the effect of my late illneſs, and ordered Sancho to give me ſome compoſing medicine when I ſhould retire to reſt; but that friendly ſervice I had rendered him, and ſoon after had the rapture of beholding my noſtrum taking effecting. Ramirez fell off into a profound ſleep; Sancho ſoon after cloſed his eyes; when Garcias and Fernandez, declaring they were invincibly drowſy too, drank more wine to rouſe them, which quickly reduced them to the ſtate I wiſhed them to be in. I then joined my meſſmates, whom I found carouſing ſo heartily, that I doubted not of their ſpeedily being in the ſituation of their officers. Many I ſoon heard ſnoring moſt ſatisfactorily; and the reſt I conjectured, from their extreme

fondneſs for liquor, would ſhortly find the irreſiſtible influence of the opium.

" The moment drew near to change the watch. The dead calm of the evening did not allow the caravel to be worked, and there were only the helmſman and one watch upon deck. The men by degrees fell into a deep ſleep; I therefore, without apprehenſion, armed myſelf, and haſtened to Garcias, whom, with his companions, I found in a ſtate of total inſenſibility. I took their lamp away, locked them in their cabin, and put the key in my pocket. Again I looked upon my meſſmates, and found them all exactly as I wiſhed them to be. I extinguiſhed all the lights and got upon deck, where, without noiſe, I faſtened down the hatches. My lady's cabin had been locked by Garcias, and no where could I find the key; and I feared to burſt the door, leſt I ſhould alarm her and awaken any of the ſleepers: one only way remained for me to get her out of the power of Garcias, and I haſtened to get to it.

" The darkneſs of the night favoured my deſign: I approached the watch at the prow,

a mere lad, who, believing me the relief, felt no apprehenſion, until, with my piſtol at his breaſt, I terrified him into my ſervice. I ordered him to follow me in ſilence: he did ſo; and I advanced to the helmſman, an athletic fellow, poſſeſſing a daring and intrepid ſpirit. To ſubdue him I thought would be no eaſy taſk, but Providence ſtill favoured me. He had for ſome days been afflicted with a ſevere cough and hoarſeneſs, and the exertions he had been forced to make during the laſt night's ſtorm and the evening's battle ſo increaſed the latter, that he can now only articulate in low and indiſtinct whiſpers. I had therefore nothing to fear from his calling for aſſiſtance, though much from his reſiſtance; and upon my conquering him depended my lady's eſcape, and not only my own life, but thoſe of many whom I eſteemed. I advanced to him with a piſtol preſented—

"'Henriquez,' ſaid I, 'I am deſperate: you muſt either yield to me, or one of us muſt die upon the inſtant.'

"'What can you mean?' he replied alarmed.

"'That you either accompany me inſtant-

ly to the brigantine, ſuffer me to tie you to your poſt, or fight with me until one of us conquers and the other dies.'

" ' The man is mad,' ſaid he.

" ' I am ſo with deſperation,' I replied. ' The ſhip's company I have already ſecured to a man, and ſleeping profoundly under the operation of opium, ſo that you have no aſſiſtance to expect from them. Come, Henriquez, be ſpeedy in your determination.'

" ' I will fight no more to-night,' ſaid he. ' Go to bed, Diego. The fatigue you have undergone has proved too much after your late ſevere illneſs, and you are feveriſh.'

" Whether he really thought me delirious, and had no idea of my deſign, or that he was unaccountably panic-ſtruck, I know not, but he ſeemed afraid of me; and, without much difficulty, I and the lad Vaſquez (who luckily had a ſtrong enmity to Henriquez) fettered and bound him to the helm. Now, preceded by Vaſquez, I haſtened to the boat, which was lying-to in readineſs for Garcias to board the brigantine during the night, to ſee that Roderiquez, Guzman, and Felix, whom

he left to guard the prisoners, did their duty. Without delay we rowed hither, where, as I concluded there must be some little commotion at first, I considered it better not to fetch lady Victoria until all hostilities were over, and every thing in readiness for her reception.

" Roderiquez and Guzman, believing I was come with orders from Garcias, had no suspicion of me, and therefore I conferred with Felix safely. At first we thought of liberating the prisoners before we attacked Roderiquez and Guzman; but we afterwards considered that, while we were engaged below, they might discover our design, make off to the caravel, arouse the sleepers, and cut off all hope of rescuing my lady, for whose sake I had thus become a traitor to my master. Together then we set upon them. Not so easily were they subdued as Henriquez; but we did conquer them without bloodshed. Vasquez then raised the hatches, and we descended with our new-made prisoners.

" It would be impossible for me to describe the transport our intelligence conveyed

to the poor devoted victims in the hold. I only waited to liberate Thomas, who accompanied me to the ſtern of the caravel. With ſome difficulty we got a window open, without noiſe, in the cabin where lady Victoria was, whom, thanks to Providence, we ſucceeded in bringing hither; and the moment I beheld her in ſafety, was the firſt of happineſs I have felt ſince my dear departed lord, her noble father, left me at the caſtle of Paulino."

When Diego finiſhed his eventful narrative, he was hailed by his meſſmates with loud acclamations, in which Victoria's, Hippolyto's, and Pedro's leſs boiſterous applauſes and acknowledgments were loſt: but to deſerve their praiſe was the higheſt gratification to Diego's heart.

CHAP. II.

THE night was impenetrably dark, and the ſeamen augured from ſome portentous appearances in the clouds an approaching ſtorm. Victoria, therefore, retired to her little cabin, to offer up to the throne of mercy her thankſgivings for her late miraculous eſcape, and to ſupplicate for protection through the expected tempeſt. Hippolyto alſo, by the poſitive mandate of Pedro, retired to another part of the brigantine; where, with the reſt of the wounded men, it was hoped he might obtain a little reſt. Vain hope the angry elements deſtroyed; ſince, after jarring for ſome time, they at length burſt out into a degree of tremendous violence which no ſeaman on board had ever before witneſſed.

The ſtorm on the preceding night might be termed a gentle breeze when compared to this; and the veſſel was much leſs able to contend with it, conſiderably damaged by the

late action; and although ſhe had gained four capital hands from the caravel, three of her laſt night's crew were diſabled by wounds, and Hippolyto could now be ſcarcely of any ſervice. Victoria ſoon was chaſed by terror from her little cabin to the deck; where the wounded men crept too, and where every inſtant, immerſed by the boiling ſurges, they expected to be waſhed away.

The horrors of the tempeſt increaſing faſt, every man exerted himſelf in the performance of his duty; in which, kindneſs and attention to Victoria were not forgotten. Hippolyto ſcarcely left her a moment, ſince he could now be of little uſe to the haraſſed ſeamen. The fetters of Rodriguez and Guzman were ſtruck off, ſince their aſſiſtance became neceſſary in the moment of general danger; and dreadful was that moment. The howling and ungovernable wind ruſhed with headlong fury to the bottom of the deep, to ſtir up rage and ſtrife; while the indignant ſea, agitated to convulſive foam, aroſe in boiling ſurges to the clouds, to dare the bold diſturber of his ſerenity. The heavy ſable clouds, hurried impetuouſly along, all claſhed

in diſcord, and rolled in awful peals their moſt tremendous thunder, whilſt livid lightning flaſhed almoſt inceſſantly; and the whole expanſion of the Mediterranean ſea now appeared like columns and rocks of flaming fire; except when at intervals the moſt horrible darkneſs reſted on its ſurface, ſhutting out for a moment even the foaming billows from every mortal eye.

Againſt this dreadful conflict the veſſel had not power to contend. The maſts and rigging were ſhattered to pieces, and borne away from time to time by the unpitying winds; whilſt the raging billows attacked her with equal violence, hurling her from hill to valley, which the ſurges made, without mercy or reſpite.

Hippolyto ſtill anxiouſly ſupported Victoria, whoſe fortitude was terribly ſhaken by the painful reflexion of her being the means of deſtruction to ſo many humane individuals. Wounded gratitude drew torrents of agoniſing tears from her, whilſt her heart and lips devoutly breathed forth prayers to her Creator, into whoſe preſence ſhe now each moment expected to be ſummoned; and Hippolyto's

attention was divided between thoſe ſerious thoughts which ſincere piety inſpired, and the moſt tender care of our heroine, whoſe fate appeared to diſturb his mind infinitely more than his own.

Diſaſter upon diſaſter ſucceeded through this night of horrors; and the morning's dawn found them completely diſmaſted, deprived of their rudder, and the ſhattered hulk nothing better than a wreck. Whilſt there remained any thing to be done for the general ſafety, the mariners had been indefatigable in their exertions and toil; but, when dreadfully convinced that the poſſibility of being uſeful was paſt, they threw themſelves, certain of inevitable deſtruction, upon the deck, in deſponding hopeleſs groups. In this moment of awful inaction, thought acquired full dominion over all. The days that were paſt recurred to some in terrible array, and told them a tale they had long refuſed to hear. Thoſe who had ſcoffed at the exiſtence of a Deity now felt conviction unbidden ariſe, and, as the deluſions of life were paſſing off, believed and trembled; whilſt thoſe who through their exiſtence loved and revered their Crea-

tor, found the ties that bound them to him draw closer round their hearts, as they believed themselves approaching to his presence.

Diego and Thomas crept close to Hippolyto and Victoria, still offering them every assistance in their power, and striving by the means of some wet sails to screen them from the impetuosity of the angry surges; evincing their fidelity, and the warmth of their attachment, in a moment when interested motives could no longer actuate.

The boats had been long since washed from the deck, and each instant large planks of the hulk were torn off, and carried away with dreadful violence by the implacable billows. They had, whilst in their power, fired signals of distress. They had heard the same dreadful signals repeated by many fellow sufferers; but no one came to their relief. The cruel and outrageous elements had now wrested every hope away, and in awful silence they all sat expecting the moment of inevitable death—some with eyes raised to heaven; others with their heads sunk upon their breast, in gloomy despair; while some more, with

lingering fondneſs for life, looked wiſtfully around for ſuccour, which departed hope no longer promiſed them.

At length, when morning's dawn advanced to clear and certain light, Guzman, suddenly exclaiming that he ſaw rocks at no great diſtance, as ſuddenly diſencumbering himſelf from his upper garment, plunged into the ſea and made for them. This break upon the general awful ſilence, by reſtoring the ſoother hope, rouſed at once the faculties of all to action, and many of his meſſmates on the inſtant inſtinctively followed Guzman; while others, more wary, pauſed to obſerve the fate of their precipitate companions before they ventured. But as Guzman and his group were ſeen to buffet ſucceſsfully with the waves, and to emerge conſtantly, unſubdued from the foaming whirlpools, after having appeared to the hoping, fearing, panting beholders to have been ingulfed, theſe determined, as a forlorn hope, to make alſo for the rocks, which they now diſtinctly ſaw.

Dreadfully the wounded mariners now groaned, as if their misfortunes were augmented by the proſpect of their comrades'

safety. Pedro, Thomas, and a few more, advancing to Hippolyto, desired him fearlessly to venture with them, as they would take it by turns to supply the loss of his disabled arm.

"Come, come, dear heart, cheer up and launch!" vociferated Thomas: "I could swim for a wager with any lubberly fish in the deep. I'll therefore warrant to tow you safely into harbour, d—n my eyes but I will! So weigh anchor, my prince of heroes! I'll be your rudder; and Diego, as swift and steady a sailor as e'er skimmed the ocean, shall be your helmsman."

"Can lady Victoria be saved?" Hippolyto anxiously demanded.

"No; that would be an utter impossibility," was mournfully reiterated by all.

"Then go, my friends—delay not; and may Heaven conduct you in safety!" said Hippolyto, with a farewell and hurrying motion of his hand; and then sadly turned with a countenance of tenderness and anguish to the care of Victoria, from whom his attention had for some moments wandered to observe the progress of Guzman's attempt.

"What!" exclaimed Thomas, "and leave you here to founder with the Victoria?"

"Yes, certainly. But go, my friends, delay not," replied Hippolyto mournfully—but without averting his face from his lovely charge, whose ſtruggling feelings at that moment created new alarms in his anxious breaſt.

"What! ſail without you? Then I'll be d—n'd if I do!" and down Thomas ſquatted cloſe to Hippolyto, whoſe legs he claſped with the utmoſt energy, as if apprehenſive of being torn by violence from him. "Split my heart now if that was not a cruel and unreaſonable order for any commander to iſſue! But theſe ſignals we Britons ever mutiny at. No, we never ſheer off from our captain or our friends in diſtreſs, and leave them to founder without us. But ſuch of my meſſmates as can prove ſuch daſtardly renegadoes, let them weigh anchor in the d—l's name, and may they live to be ſtranded upon the ſhoals of ingratitude!"

The men now, all but Pedro, plunged into the ſea, attended by the piteous moans of their wounded meſſmates, and a thouſand hearty hiſſes, groans, and hoots from the indignant Thomas, who in vain aſſured them "the Lord High Admiral aloft would one day have them before the maſt for deſerting their captain and friends in diſtreſs."

Pedro, looking for ſome moments irreſolutely, at length firmly ſaid, "My fate is fixed, I cannot leave you."

"You muſt, my good Pedro," replied Hippolyto: "if you have any friendſhip for me, you muſt ſtrive to ſave yourſelf, and ſeek out thoſe who are intereſted for my fate. Gently break this ſad cataſtrophe to them, and comfort thoſe who will feel it moſt ſeverely. You muſt alſo go to conte Arioſto, and impart to him all that has befallen his angel ſiſter. Great is your feeling, Pedro, and you will execute this ſad commiſſion as ſympathy ſhall guide you. Then delay not, Pedro, inſtantly depart, I conjure you:—and, Thomas, to you it is my

earneſt, my laſt requeſt, that you accompany Pedro.'

"I'll be d—n'd if I do then! that's flat," returned Thomas ſulkily: "ſo heave no more lingo about it."

Victoria, who had long been ſtruggling with thoſe painful feelings which gratitude awakened to ſuch exceſs inſpired, found not the power of articulation until the moment when Pedro ſeemed yielding to the importunities of Hippolyto, when in the moſt emphatic tones of ardent ſupplication ſhe exclaimed——

"Go not, I beſeech, I implore you, Pedro, without Hippolyto. Save him! ſave him! Lead him to his friends and family! Let them not curſe me as the occaſion of their grief! And oh! if you hope again to be happy with your Iſabella, let my laſt ſad moment be ſpared the agoniſing pang of knowing myſelf the deſtroyer of Hippolyto."

"Spare your entreaties, generous, lovely Victoria, ſince vain is every effort to alter my fixed determination," ſaid Hippolyto.—

"Go, then, Pedro. I will not leave her,—no, never, never. Go: delay is dangerous; and friendſhip commands you to be gone."

Pedro now, after ſnatching a parting look at the ſad group he was compelled to leave behind him, plunged amid the foaming ſurf, and made after the other ſwimmers. Victoria ſhrieking wildly, as her hope of Hippolyto's ſafety was thus cut off, ſtarted to her knees, and entreated, ſupplicated, but in vain, that he would follow Pedro.

"Oh, Hippolyto," ſhe cried, "be not thus cruel and inexorable! On you depends the life of your faithful Thomas. Embitter not, I conjure you, my laſt ſad reflexions, by making me the cauſe of your and his deſtruction. Too many fellow-ſufferers! muſt I inevitably have theſe hapleſs wounded friends; muſt—" In looking towards the men ſhe ſpoke of, ſhe beheld Diego ſtanding near, gazing with looks of anguiſh on her.

"Diego too!" ſhe exclaimed in a tone of horror, "what, what detains you here?"

"My duty, lady—ſtationed here by gra-

titude to your dear father's memory; and I dare not leave my poſt."

Victoria burſt into a violent flood of tears, whilſt Thomas vehemently ſhook Diego by the hand, ſhouting—" A ſtaunch heart, d—n my eyes! Who's afraid of foundering in a good cauſe, do you ſee? And belike, Diego, if we ſail with ſuch a convoy, we may not be ſent adrift from heaven; but be ſtowed into a ſnug birth there, out of reſpect to the virtues of thoſe who towed us thither."

" To die, while performing the duty which Heaven itſelf dictates," Diego replied, " may mitigate the doom I am conſcious I too well merit."

That gratitude which the conduct of theſe men inſpired, conquered every feeling of perſonal danger in Victoria's mind. But for their ſafety her heart was tortured to direſt anguiſh; and ſoftened to the moſt infantine weakneſs by their extraordinary kindneſs, ſhe ſunk quite ſubdued from her knees upon the wet deck, and wept abundantly—Hippolyto in vain endeavouring to aſſuage the exceſs of her affliction; for every new inſtance

of tender attention ſhe received from him, or act of kindneſs from their faithful humble friends, only increaſed her anguiſh.

For near an hour after Pedro left them they continued in this diſtreſſing hopeleſs ſituation, each moment augmenting their calamities by depriving them of more and more of the wreck upon which they floated. At length Thomas, who had been for ſome time intently gazing at ſomething which the angry billows were toſſing roughly about, ſuddenly plunged into the ſea; and Diego, in a few minutes more, diſcovering it to be a boat, ſwam after Thomas with a hope of gaining it; which they at length providentially did, and, after inconceivable difficulty, dangers, and fatigue, ſucceeded in towing it to the wreck by a cable which the angry elements had allowed to remain faſtened to it.

The duration of this attempt was a moment of agoniſing ſolicitude. The moſt fervent prayers for ſucceſs broke from the lips of every one, and great was the tranſport, almoſt amounting to phrenſied joy, when the bold enterpriſe was achieved which reſtored the truant hope: and when they had

torn ſome ſhattered planks from the wreck to ſupply the place of oars, and had made all ready for the embarkation of their fellow-ſufferers, Thomas exultingly exclaimed, firſt d—ning his eyes, with evident ſatisfaction—

"Providence, do you ſee, has heaved up this here pinnace from the hatches of the deep, to bilk that ſhark Davy Jones of his prey. And be of good cheer, do you mind, for by the boat's name and make I know her to be Engliſh; and that there old dog Neptune, loving the Britiſh oak, will ſplice out the care of Providence in ſteering us into a ſafe port."

Theſe ſhipwrecked ſufferers all now entered the pinnace, and, conſigning themſelves to the care of Providence, were ſoon borne from the wreck, when they found, notwithſtanding every exertion, their oars of little uſe. Diego and Thomas attempted to ſteer by turns, but ſoon were compelled, by the ungovernable fury of the breakers, to conſign the helm to the mercy of the elements, which bore them to leeward with dreadful velocity; one moment mounting

them aloft to a moſt terrific height, the next hurling them with headlong precipitance to the gulfs beneath; and in about an hour after they had abandoned the wreck, by the ordinance of Providence they were driven in ſafety upon the leeſhore; but in what clime or latitude, from the frequent ſhifting of the wind after they had been bereft of their compaſs in the night, they were totally unable to aſcertain: from the aſpect of the country, however, they conjectured it to be the ſouth of France.

Dripping with wet, and almoſt ſtiff with cold and fatigue, they loſt no time in quitting their friendly bark; and the moment they found themſelves upon terra firma, they all, as if inſpired by ſome reſiſtleſs impulſe, at the ſame inſtant, intuitively ſunk upon their knees and offered a pious and fervent thankſgiving to that beneficent Being, who had been graciouſly pleaſed to ſave them from a fate they had for many hours believed inevitable.

The tumult of joy and gratitude which they all naturally experienced cannot be deſcribed, and only conceived by thoſe who

have been in a ſimilar ſituation; and Victoria's happineſs upon the ſafety of her generous deliverers was as exquiſite as her grief had been poignant; and like that too it expreſſed itſelf by tears.

CHAP. III.

THEIR ſolemn and devout acknowledgements for the mercy of Heaven being ended, our adventurers advanced ſome way up the country, Hippolyto ſupporting Victoria, while Diego and Thomas gave their aſſiſtance to their wounded meſſmates, without meeting any perſon, or diſcovering any habitation, or even ſhelter from the violent torrents of rain ſave ſome large ſpreading trees. But they were all now too much accuſtomed to wet garments to ſhrink from the heavy rain. Cold, weary, and faint, they panted for the comforts of ſome hoſpitable dwelling; and ſtill hoping to meet the object of their eager ſearch, they proceeded onward as quickly as their exhauſted frames, and the weight of their clothes drenched by the ſea and rain, would admit of.

The further they advanced, the more were they perſuaded of their being caſt

upon the ſouthern coaſt of France. And they were right in their conjectures; they were in Provence, not many leagues from the confines of Italy. But an almoſt impenetrable miſt, ariſing from the rain, prevented their diſtinguiſhing objects at any diſtance; and without any friendly beacon to guide them, they wandered about until, almoſt ſubdued by toil and exertions, they began to deſpair of finding what they ſo anxiouſly ſought. And Victoria, Hippolyto, and the wounded ſeamen, were agreeing to ſhelter themſelves beneath the luxuriant branches of ſome orange-trees, while Diego and Thomas ſhould penetrate further, with a hope of meeting with ſome accommodation, when their ears were ſuddenly greeted by the ſound of a convent-bell tolling for matins at no great diſtance from them. It was the peal of hope and joy to them; and with renovated ſtrength and ſpirits the before-fainting adventurers were led on by the ſound to the gate of a monaſtery, which had been obſcured from their view by the thick foliage of the wood in which it was emboſomed.

Thomas, in his eagerneſs to ſerve his diſtreſſed companions, outſtripped their ſpeed, and by a loud peal ſummoned an aged porter, of the Carthuſian order, to the gate, and demanded admittance and food for his ſhipwrecked companions and himſelf. This was humanely aſſented to; when Thomas, in the turbulence of his joy, gave a loud whiſtle, followed by three cheers; which ſo alarmed the holy man, who believed them to be ſignals for a banditti to approach, that he inſtantly cloſed the gate. Nor could all the proteſtations and entreaties of Hippolyto and the reſt of the diſtreſſed party prevail upon him to diſband his fears, until the piteous tones of Victoria's magical voice reached his ears; at the ſound of which every apprehenſion vaniſhed, and the gate flew open, not for her admiſſion, but for the reverend man to announce his commiſeration and concern at being compelled to the cruel inhoſpitality of refuſing to let her enter;—but it was againſt the rules of their order, he ſaid, to admit any female without a licence from the biſhop of the dioceſe.

Victoria's head ſunk in deſpondence upon Hippolyto's ſhoulder, and ſhe burſt into tears; while Hippolyto and Diego looked on each other in grief and conſternation for advice in this unexpected dilemma. But the rage and indignation of Thomas, breaking through all bounds of reſpect for the poor Carthuſian, burſt forth in the moſt virulent abuſe, which fortunately his vehemence and ſtrange medley of languages rendered almoſt unintelligible.

"And you will not then admit her, holy father?" ſaid Hippolyto mournfully—"Behold the ſad ſtate ſhe is reduced to—only look upon her, and then refuſe to ſhelter her if you can."

"Poor child!" replied the porter, "from my ſoul I pity her; but I dare not tranſgreſs the rules of our pious inſtitution."

"Pious inſtitution!" repeated Thomas contemptuouſly. "D—n my eyes, a pretty ſham that! Hoiſting falſe colours with a vengeance! A piratical renegado hanging out a government flag! Fair weather faces, but foul weather hearts! A pious inſtitution! Old Will o' th' wiſp! that

refuſes an almoſt foundering little bark a ſafe harbour! A pious inſtitution, to ſnug yourſelf up like a ſnail in your own inhoſpitable houſe, that will admit no one elſe! A pious inſtitution, d—n my eyes! that—"

"I will aſſiſt my afflicted daughter as much as lies in my power," interrupted the porter meekly.

"Well," cried Thomas impatiently, heave no more lingo then; but pipe all hands, and tow her into harbour, do you ſee."

"I will conduct her to the church," ſaid the porter, "and take refreſhments to her there. I can do no more."

"What, to the cold church!" enclaimed Thomas.

"Yes: the church is a ſanctuary for all who take refuge in it."

"Then you ſhould navigate your piety by that chart, do you ſee. God, you ſay, harbours all who ſail to his port for refuge; and he has made that ſignal for you to ſteer by."

The porter, not in the leaſt offended by

Thomas's bluntneſs, probably from not perfectly comprehending his ſtrange mixture of broken French and Spaniſh grafted upon his Engliſh ſea vocabulary, ſtood gazing intently at our heroine; and at length he ſaid in a voice of compaſſion—"There is no fire in the church, and this poor child is ſhivering with cold, and dripping wet—what can I do?"

"Do!" cried Thomas: "why, run her into dry dock to refit, to be ſure."

"I dare not take it upon myſelf to do what my heart dictates; but I will hear what brother Anſelmo ſays," replied the porter, ringing a bell.

"Oh!" exclaimed Thomas, clinching his fiſts, and ſtamping his feet in a paroxyſm of rage, "Oh, that you were but a *young* lubber, *mounſeer*, that I might knock you and your ſcruples down together!"

In a moment more two monks appeared at the gate. One was young, heavy-eyed, enveloped in a maſs of fleſh, and evidently fonder of the luxuries than the mortifications of life: the other, an aged man, ſeemed Piety perſonified. In his deportment were

dignity and grace, happily blended with unaffected modeſty; while his fine venerable countenance legibly diſplayed the ſparkling intelligence of ſuperior intellect, ſoftened by the ſweetly intereſting brow of placid ſerenity, humility, and beneficence. The porter briefly announced to him the diſtreſs that ſued for admittance; when haſtily advancing to our heroine—

"My child," ſaid he in a voice formed from the ſweeteſt tones of nature, and improved by the harmony of conſcious virtue, "my ſweet child, was I ſuperior here, I think for your ſake I ſhould be tempted to infringe the auſtere rules of our order; but, alas! for you I am but of little conſequence in this monaſtery: yet will I treſpaſs for you. A little penance will rectify all; and I think I would willingly encounter a great one to do you ſervice. I will venture to take you to the porter's lodge, where a cheerful fire blazes; and I truſt my rendering you this little ſervice, my daughter, will not impede my way to heaven."

"Impede!" vociferated Thomas. "No, no, old True Blue, it will be both wind and

tide in your favour. Good actions are the beſt paſſports to heaven. So, do you ſee, be getting under-weigh for that harbour, and run the dear little bark into ſnug mooring."

Father Anſelmo kindly led Victoria into the porter's lodge, and placed her in a comfortable eaſy chair, before an excellent fire, while the reſt of the party followed the good man's ſteps. Victoria, looking around and beholding all her protectors in ſafety and comfortable ſhelter, wept the ſweet tears of gratitude and pleaſure. Father Anſelmo ordered the porter to haſten to the refectory for ſome cordials and other refreſhments for their weary gueſts, and to bring ſomething particularly delicate for their poor daughter, who ſeemed quite ſubdued by fatigue and ſuffering.

"Oh! think not of me, holy father," exclaimed Victoria, "think not of me, I conjure you, until theſe my wounded companions are attended to. It cannot be againſt the rules of your order to ſhelter them, and they have been ſeverely wounded in the cauſe of humanity; and all they have en-

countered, during the horrors and fatigues of the tempeſt, muſt have proved dreadfully inimical to their wounds, and I tremble for their ſafety. Oh! delay not your attention to them, I entreat, I implore you, dear good and reverend father! To aſſiſt them will be the higheſt act of kindneſs you can ſhow to me, and will renovate my ſtrength and ſpirits more effectually than any anodyne your humanity can beſtow upon me."

"My daughter, your grateful anxiety ſhall be relieved," ſaid the holy man. "Brother Auguſtine, conduct theſe our wounded ſons into the houſe, where our daughter may reſt ſatisfied that every poſſible care ſhall be taken of them."

The wounded ſeamen departed with the fat Carthuſian; but Hippolyto, inexorable to the entreaties of father Anſelmo and Victoria, abſolutely refuſed to quit our heroine before he ſhould leave her in a ſafe aſylum.

"There is a convent of Benedictine ſiſters, dedicated to St. Marguerite, not much more than a league from hence, where ſhe would be ſafe, and tenderly attended to,"

ſaid father Anſelmo. "The prioreſs is a ſiſter of mine, who has been lately exalted by her virtues to that high ſtation; and ſhe would, I think, love and cheriſh this drooping child. But, ſhort as the diſtance is, it would be impoſſible for her to walk there in her exhauſted ſtate; and to wait until we could procure a conveyance from the neareſt town might prove a dangerous delay; for ſhe ought inſtantly to be put into a warm bed, and every precaution taken to reſcue her from the unpleaſant conſequences that may elſe attend the fatigue, cold, and terror ſhe has encountered."

Hippolyto was in an agony of alarm about her—"What could be done for her immediate accommodation," he eagerly demanded. Thomas propoſed that he and Diego ſhould make a raft of their arms to heave her upon, and bear away with her to the port of St. Marguerite's; and Diego was planning to carry her thither in the porter's chair, when father Anſelmo ſuddenly thought of a nearer aſylum.

"There is," ſaid he, "a château at a very inconſiderable diſtance from this monaſtery,

which is generally let to invalids who come into Provence for the benefit of our salubrious air. The family who inhabited it this year past are just gone: but I hear it has already got other tenants; and if the principals are not yet arrived, there must surely be some female domestic there, who would, for a proper gratuity, give the requisite assistance to our poor child, whom by to-morrow I trust we shall be able to remove to St. Marguerite's; and if not, we can procure from thence, and our own convent, every medicinal and other aid she can require."

The porter now returned loaded with refreshments; of which Victoria eagerly partook, and was so much renovated by them and the good fire, that, with her remaining companions, she was soon able, after making their acknowledgments to the humane porter, to bend their way to the château, which from the convent-gate they saw through a vista, at a very trifling distance.

Soon they arrived at the gate of the château; when the good father Anselmo, who accompanied them, requested an asylum for

a young ſhipwrecked female, from the porter, who ſullenly replied—" they harboured no mendicant friars or pilgrims."

" Nor does any mendicant friar ſolicit admiſſion," returned Anſelmo with dignity. " The monks of St. Lewis want not the aſſiſtance of any human being for themſelves; but it is for this young fainting female, who was wrecked upon our coaſt in the tremendous tempeſt of laſt night, that I now ſupplicate an aſylum here."

" I do not want for charity," ſaid the porter; " but I might loſe my place was I to ſhelter ſuch objects as thoſe."

The appearance of our adventurers too well ſanctioned the contemptible opinion this man entertained of them. The garb of Hippolyto, Diego, and Thomas, was the uniform worn by Don Manuel's people; and the impetuous winds, rain, and billows, had rent and waſhed away every ſymptom of former reſpectability. All Victoria's ornaments had been removed or loſt, during her indiſpoſition, in the caravel of Garcias, or been blown away in the ſubſequent ſtorm. Her beautiful hair, liberated from all con-

finement, deluged by the ſea and rain, literally flowed around her neck and ſhoulders; her garments, which, when ſhe fled from Don Manuel's caſtle, were elegant and ſuperb, now hung in dirty, tattered, half-wet, remnants round her; and nothing could be more deplorable and poverty-ſtruck than the aſpect of them all.

Hippolyto, to remove every ſuſpicion of poverty, put ſome pieces of gold into the porter's hand; when inſtantly the gate was thrown open, and the whole party admitted into the hall, where a large fire blazed, and where chairs were now courteouſly ſet before it for them all. The porter was informed by Anſelmo, that it was neceſſary for Victoria to go immediately into a warm bed, to prevent if poſſible any fatal effects from the ſevere cold ſhe had but too evidently caught.

"That is out of my power to accommodate her with," ſaid the porter: "but the moment the houſekeeper riſes, which will not be this hour or two, I will ſpeak to her about it; and I think a little of that black gentleman's arguments will quickly perſuade her; as my lord has not yet arrived,

and there are, therefore, plenty of ſpare beds in the château."

"Hang the ſwab!" cried Thomas; "won't ſhe turn out a bit ſooner to ſteer a ſick body into a ſnug birth?"

"I dare not wake her," replied the now civil porter: "for if ſhe has not her ſleep out ſhe is as croſs as the d—l all the day."

"If I knew what port to come alongſide of her in, I'd pipe her from her hammock," ſaid Thomas, whiſtling loud by way of ſpecimen; which in a moment drew half a dozen lacqueys into the hall, who entered yawning and ſtretching, and, with eyes half open, demanded the cauſe of the uproar: which the porter telling, they drew chairs into the circle to gratify their curioſity by ſtaring at our poor heroine; and in a moment more a female domeſtic made her appearance, and inquired the reaſon of ſuch a tumult. One of the lacqueys briefly ſtated the fact, and then continued—"Do, dear Annette, be like yourſelf, compaſſionate: go and awake madame Bourdaloue, and tell her

how ſick, wet, and weary the poor girl is who wants a bed."

"Poor thing!" cried Annette, "I will do all I can for her:" and ſhe turned to go out of the door ſhe had entered by.

"Do, pray, good Annette," ſaid the injudicious young man; "do, pray, for I feel quite intereſted for the poor girl, ſhe is so young, and ſo very beautiful."

"Beautiful!" repeated Annette contemptuouſly. "Oh, I had quite forgotten: 'tis not madame Bourdaloue's hour for riſing, and I will not awake her, let the girl be ever ſo beautiful, monſieur François!" and ſhe walked ſcornfully acroſs the hall to another part of the château.

"D—n your ſquinting eyes," vociferated Thomas: "becauſe the veſſel's well built, you ſheer off from her in her diſtreſs, you ugly wizen ſwab, you!"

"I would myſelf go to madame," ſaid the humane François, "only that by awaking her before her time I ſhould make her croſs and diſobliging." Then perceiving that Diego, who was ſtanding behind Victoria's

chair, looked fatigued, asked him with kindness, why he did not take a seat?

"It would but ill become me," replied Diego, "to sit in the presence of my lady."

"Lady!" repeated the rest of the lacqueys, smothering a laugh, whilst they cast a sneering glance upon Victoria's tattered drapery.

Diego could bear no more. Such repeated insults to his lady's consequence taught him at once to forget the importance of secresy, and with mien erect and indignant frown he haughtily said—"And I must add, that it ill befits any of the persons present, excepting the holy father and signior Hippolyto, to sit in the presence of lady Victoria di Modena, the daughter of the late and sister to the present most illustrious conte di Arioſto."

In a moment the porter and lacqueys were upon their feet, and seats and all removed to the farthest extremity of the hall; where bowing obsequiously, they offered a hundred thousand apologies for their indecorous conduct; then threw open the door of a grand apartment, where two of the men instantly set about lighting a fire, and Annette was loudly summoned to go and awake madame

Bourdaloue; while the compaſſionate Jacqueys precipitately retreated from the hall, and in a few moments returned, following a very pretty young woman, who, pale, trembling, and almoſt breathleſs with agitation, ruſhed in, and throwing herſelf at Victoria's feet, rapturouſly caught both her hands, which ſhe preſſed to her heart, to her lips; while ſobs and tears of joy deprived her of the power of utterance.

Victoria's recollection, at firſt ſuſpended by aſtoniſhment at the young woman's conduct, at length returned, and ſhe almoſt frantically exclaimed—

"Roſolia! my dear Roſolia!" and, ſinking from her ſeat upon the young woman's neck, wept aloud.

"Oh, my dear, dear, dear, my own lady!" at length ſobbed out the affectionate Roſolia, who was the identical little Tuſcan girl mentioned in our firſt pages, who had been Victoria's playmate and attendant from her infancy, and was tenderly and deſervedly beloved by her, "little did I think I ſhould ever behold you or my loſt happineſs more! To ſink ſpeedily into an early grave was

all the hope I had to save me from despair for from that fatal day you were torn from me I have been a forlorn miserable wretch, and my health so rapidly declined, that the duchess sent me hither, with a hope this air might be of service to me. But surely I should soon have fallen a victim to my grief, had I not found my own darling lady again. But how have I found her? Oh my bursting heart! Cold, wet, and ill. Oh, what a situation this for my lady Victoria to be in! Alas! alas! what can I do for her, to evince my affection, my gratitude?'

Hippolyto approaching Rosolia, took one of her hands, and pressed it with grateful fervor. "Put lady Victoria instantly into a warm bed," said he. Rosolia, precipitately turning to answer the speaker, on perceiving her white hand grasped by a black one, shrunk from its touch; which Victoria observing, and alarmed and hurt lest Hippolyto's feelings should be wounded by such a manifest appearance of disgust, hastily, but tremulously, said—"My Rosolia, this gentleman, this friend, restored me to you. Love him for my sake, since to him, and these his

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brave companions, am I indebted for life, for more than life. They reſcued me from wretchedneſs; and, oh! what wondrous tales have I to recount to you of all their goodneſs to me!" and ſhe wept anew.

"Is it to him I owe my lady Victoria's life? Then he is my friend, and I ſhall love him for his own ſake," ſobbed out Roſolia, carrying with eager gratitude that hand to her lips which but a moment before ſhe had ſhrunk from the touch of.

"But cannot you, Roſolia, procure me a bed?" ſaid Victoria. "Indeed, indeed, I am unable to ſit up much longer."

"Go inſtantly, François," ſaid Roſolia, "and order Jeanne to light a fire in the ducheſſa's chamber, and Annette to warm the bed. I ſhall myſelf undreſs my lady, and give her ſome of the ducheſſa's night things."

"What ducheſſa do you talk of, my good Roſolia?" faintly demanded Victoria.

"Of Manfredonia, madam, your aunt."

"Holy virgin!" exclaimed Victoria ſtarting from her ſeat. "Exhauſted as I am, Hippolyto, I muſt wander further on. Here I cannot remain."

Roſolia aſſured her that ſhe might ſafely; for though they had expected the ducheſſa the preceding day, by which means her bed was ready aired, an expreſs had arrived late in the evening, to ſay ſhe ſhould not come for three weeks longer; and as Hippolyto ſtrongly urged her to remain there for a day or two, ſhe at length aſſented.

Father Anſelmo now gave ſome directions to Roſolia relative to the treatment of Victoria, to prevent, if poſſible, any unpleaſant effects from all ſhe had lately ſuffered, and promiſed to return in an hour with one of the fathers of St. Lewis, who was a ſkilful phyſician.

Annette now appeared, to announce the apartment being in readineſs for our heroine's reception. Victoria inſtantly aroſe, and, throwing one hand upon Roſolia's ſhoulder, extended the other to Hippolyto.

"Hippolyto, my friend! my deliverer! farewell!" ſaid ſhe, "and believe me I carry with me a juſt impreſſion of your kindneſs to me. You now leave me in a place of ſafety; and delay not, I conjure you, to return to St. Lewis with this holy father, who will, I am

ſure, be careful of you. But remember, Hippolyto, you muſt not neglect yourſelf. Be aſſured I ſhall know no peace until I hear you are not to ſuffer more for your humanity to me. Adieu then, my preſerver! my friend! and believe me, I ſhall think each hour a century until I ſee you reſtored to health." Then raiſing her eyes to give a laſt look to this her amiable, her highly eſtimated friend, ſhe beheld him ſo dejected, ſo grieved, ſo full of anguiſh, at the idea of their ſeparation, that her head ſunk upon Roſolia's ſhoulder to conceal her emotion, which now was nearly equal to his own. He had taken her offered hand; ſhe had felt, in his tremulous graſp, the convulſive agitation of his frame; her ſympathiſing frame caught the infectious tremor, and ſhe wondered what it could mean; and after a thoughtful pauſe ſhe again raiſed her head, betraying a face ſuffuſed with the ſweeteſt bluſhes of timid ſenſibility, while down her lovely cheeks ſtrayed the pearly drops of ſorrow, caught from Hippolyto's grief, or prompted by her own. And to Thomas ſhe now addreſſed an unembarraſſed, and, in conſequence, elo-

quent acknowledgment for his humanity to her; entreated his particular attention to Hippolyto and Diego; and requeſted to ſee him the ſubſequent day, that ſhe might learn from him how his invalid companions were going on. Then turning to Diego, ſhe was about to ſpeak her farewell and thanks to him, when he, reſpectfully bowing, interrupted her by ſaying—

"Lady Victoria forgets that, in being her domeſtic, I have a claim to an aſylum here."

Victoria, happy in the idea of Diego's remaining near her, recommended him in the moſt effectual manner to the care of the domeſtics, and deſired the ſame directions father Anſelmo had given for her ſhould be obſerved towards Diego. Then making her acknowledgments to the benevolent monk, ſhe left the hall to retire to reſt.

CHAP. IV.

VICTORIA, attended by Annette, was led by Roſolia to an elegant apartment, where a cheerful fire blazed, and where the anxious Roſolia, with the two other females, Annette and Jeanne, haſtened to obey the good monk's injunctions, and then put our heroine into a warm and comfortable bed; where madame Bourdaloue, who had been informed what gueſt the château was honoured with, made her ſwallow ſome very potent wine whey, which ſoon threw her into a heavy ſlumber, in which ſhe appeared ſo reſtleſs and uneaſy, and moaned ſo piteouſly, that poor Roſolia was in an agony of apprehenſion, and watched with trembling impatient ſolicitude for the promiſed viſit of father Anſelmo and his medical brother, who, punctual to their time, at length arrived; when the phyſician, father Pierre, after obſerving her pulſe, and her uneaſy

ſleep, declared, to the concern of all, but to the inconſolable grief of the affectionate Roſolia, that he apprehended a fever was coming on, and of a kind that would make rapid advances. And he ſpoke but too prophetically; for in his return in the evening he found her in the delirium of a fever, which continued for five days with augmenting violence; and it required all the exertions of this good monk's ſkill—and he poſſeſſed almoſt as much as the humane Pedro—to bring her through it. But from the moment the diſorder arrived at its criſis it took a favourable turn; and her amendment became ſo rapid, that in eight days after her fever's height ſhe was able to quit her bed, and in the courſe of four ſubſequent days to go into the adjoining dreſſing-room, and to walk a little about her apartments, aſſiſted by the almoſt heart-broken Roſolia, whom no perſuaſion could tear from the bedſide of her adored lady as long as ſhe was confined to it, although two hoſpital ſiſters had been ſent from the Benedictine nuns to nurſe Victoria.

In the firſt dawn of returning reaſon, our

grateful heroine anxiouſly inquired from father Pierre for her friends under his care; and he relieved her ſolicitude by aſſuring her they all were well. But in this the good monk's humanity led him to deceive her; ſince Hippolyto and Diego had, like herſelf, been dangerouſly ill, and were now, like her, only juſt giving faint hopes of recovery; but both in total ignorance of her indiſpoſition, a knowledge of which the monk ſoon found would but augment theirs. The wounded ſeamen were going on ſurpriſingly even from their firſt entrance into the monaſtery; and Thomas had ſuffered little bodily inconvenience ſince the two firſt days after his ſhipwreck: but of mental infliction he had his ſhare, ſince he knew of Victoria's and Diego's danger; and never left the pillow of Hippolyto, even to take a ſhort repoſe, but ſat by the ſide of his gallant captain, as he called him, blubbering over him like a child, notwithſtanding all the eloquence of the good Carthuſians, who ſtrove in vain to preach back his manhood to him.

When abating illneſs allowed Victoria to be ſufficiently collected, ſhe employed Ro-

ſolia—whoſe attendance ſhe now would not ſuffer to be ſo unremitting, as ſhe ſaw by the languor and ſtriking alteration in her countenance how infinite had been her fatigue and anxiety—to write to conte Arioſto a ſlight account of her ſituation; and to entreat him, as ſhe could have no hope of his being able to quit his regiment at ſuch a juncture, to ſend father Alberti to her immediately. Roſolia alſo wrote a letter to ſignora Farinelli, requeſting to ſee her as ſoon as poſſible; which letter Victoria deſired her to direct to the care of Urſuline's brother at Florence.

Victoria's anxiety for her removal to St. Marguerite's hourly increaſed, as the time for the ducheſſa's coming approached; and in fifteen days after her arrival in Provence, father Pierre—in anſwer to her earneſt entreaty for permiſſion to remove to the convent of St. Marguerite, the abbeſs of which had viſited her twice, and won her higheſt admiration—promiſed her that in three days more ſhe ſhould go, as he thought by that time ſhe might remove without much danger; and that he and father Anſelmo ſhould

accompany her and Roſolia there in a coach, which he would order from Nice to convey them.

From this time, her mind being more at eaſe, Victoria's health and ſtrength rapidly augmented. The preſence of the hoſpital ſiſters being no longer neceſſary, they returned to their convent; and Victoria's renovating ſpirits ſoon enabled her to enter into long conferences with Roſolia, from whom ſhe learned all that had occurred in conte Vicenza's family ſince her baniſhment. After pathetically recounting the diſtreſs of herſelf and the reſt of Victoria's domeſtics, at loſing ſo myſteriouſly their beloved young lady, Roſolia continued—

" All lady Victoria's poor ſorrowful attendants were immediately diſmiſſed, except myſelf, whom the ducheſſa choſe to retain in the place of Hero: and not very long after lady Victoria's departure, the comte de Montfort and conte di Urbino returned from the chace; when the latter learned all that had happened during his abſence. Conte di Urbino, I had reaſon to know, beheld my dear young lady with partiality too great for his

repoſe; and upon this ſad intelligence he flew, half frantic with grief and diſmay, to the ducheſſa, with whom he had a long conference, but left her with his fine countenance pale as death, his air dejected, and his whole frame almoſt convulſed by agitation, and haſtened to conte Vicenza, with whom he had ſome high words; after which ſeveral of the domeſtics ſaw conte Urbino, during the day, wandering about in the wood, or lying on the banks of the lake, like one ſubdued by ſorrow and deſpair. But from that evening neither he nor conte Vicenza was ever ſeen or heard of during the time I remained at the château, which was until a few days before lady Victoria's arrival here.

"Comte de Montfort did not quit the château as the other gueſts did, upon the myſterious departure of conte Vicenza; for the ducheſſa was ſo low-ſpirited, ſhe entreated his ſtay until ſome intelligence could be obtained of her huſband or his nephew, the extraordinary abſence of whom ſhe appeared totally at a loſs to account for."

Roſolia now changed colour, and heſitated for a few moments in evident embarraſſment: at length ſhe proceeded—

" It would but ill become me to animadvert upon the conduct of my ſuperiors. Particularly lady Victoria, I hope, will believe the painful intelligence I am compelled to communicate to her I would not for worlds ſhock her by, was it not, alas! become too public for concealment. Almoſt from my firſt reſidence at the château di Vicenza I remember to have heard the domeſtics often talking of the light conduct of the ducheſſa; and when I grew old enough to form opinions upon what I heard, I concluded their ſcandal aroſe from enmity, or the depravity of their own hearts. But ſoon, alas! when about her perſon, I learned that their innuendos were but too well grounded; for I then plainly ſaw how very regardleſs ſhe was of fame, and how deficient ſhe was in all that could make a female eſtimable. Reared by ſignora Farinelli, and being through life the conſtant humble companion of lady Victoria di Modena, my mind from precept and example had caught the flame of

genuine purity; and my countenance, too ingenuous to conceal my feelings, betrayed my deteſtation of the ducheſſa's conduct; and in conſequence, under pretence of this air being beneficial for my declining health, I was ſent with ſome of comte de Montfort's domeſtics to this château, which he has lately taken, and where it is expected the ducheſſa will reſide until the divorce takes place between her and conte Vicenza, which is now publicly talked of: and here, I find, her nuptials with comte de Montfort are to be celebrated."

Victoria, although prepared by Polydore and Hero for this intelligence, felt dreadfully ſhocked at this inconteſtable confirmation of her aunt's depravity: and ſhe wept in ſilence; for as ſuch conduct could not be defended, ſo ſhe was too dutiful to raiſe her voice in condemnation of her father's ſiſter. But ſhe now mentally reſolved, as ſoon as father Alberti and Urſuline ſhould arrive, to take the proper ſteps for enabling her to chooſe another guardian; and the hour for her departure to the Benedictine convent was now more ardently wiſhed for than ever,

ſince to remain longer under the roof of her aunt's paramour ſhe thought a moſt reprehenſible degradation to her purity. But ſhe found father Pierre inexorable to her petition for haſtening her removal; although he informed her with a good-humoured ſmile, that he had another petitioner for her ſpeedy removal to St. Marguerite's. "Monſieur Hippolyto," said he, "longs moſt impatiently to have the happineſs of ſeeing you: but knows he muſt not plead for the honour of an interview until, under the protection of the prioreſs of St. Marguerite's, you can with propriety grant it to him; for now, he ſays, neceſſity no longer compels you to meaſures from which your ſpotleſs and trembling purity was ever revolting."

"Tell him, reverend father," replied Victoria, "that my wiſh to ſee my preſerver has not been the leaſt powerful in urging my anxiety for my removal."

The day preceding that fixed on for Victoria's little journey, ſhe ventured, ſupported by Roſolia and Jeanne, into the pleaſure-grounds, where for the firſt time ſince her

reſidence in the château ſhe ſaw Diego: and ſincere was their pleaſure at meeting, although the altered appearance and viſible weakneſs of each proclaimed to the other their recent indiſpoſition; and Diego, in ſpeaking of his, mentioned with the moſt animated gratitude Roſolia's attention and humanity to him; for although Roſolia had totally dedicated herſelf to attend her adored lady, ſhe yet forgot not him who had befriended that lady, and had therefore taken every precaution to prevent his experiencing any neglect; and ſince Victoria had ceaſed to require her whole attention, ſhe had often viſited Diego, to ſee that every thing was done for his comfort and reſtoration to health.

"My beloved Roſolia," ſaid Victoria, affectionately embracing her, "how have you increaſed my obligations to you by this kindneſs to my friend, my good Diego!"

"If lady Victoria loves me," replied Roſolia, "ſhe will not talk of being obliged to me, who owe to her every comfort I poſſeſs. Monſieur Diego was kind to my dear lady in her diſtreſs, and well he merits the eſteem

and attention of all attached to her: as for myſelf, I ſhall ever regard and reverence him as if he was my father.

The before pale cheeks of Diego now ſluſhed to a deep tint of crimſon. "And from your attachment to our amiable and honoured lady, and from your humanity to me, I ſhall ever behold you with the attention of a tender friend and *brother*," ſaid Diego, laying a marked emphaſis upon the laſt word.

On Victoria's return to her apartment, ſhe found herſelf ſo much fatigued by her little walk, that ſhe was eaſily perſuaded by madame Bourdaloue and Roſolia to lie down to reſt; when ſhe ſoon fell into a gentle ſlumber, from which ſhe awoke conſiderably refreſhed; and, wiſhing to ariſe, looked around for Roſolia to aſſiſt her; when ſhe, to her utter diſmay, beheld Bianca in earneſt conference with Jeanne. An exclamation of ſurpriſe from Victoria announced her being awake, and Bianca inſtantly approached her: but not like the ſame Bianca ſhe had laſt ſeen; ſhe was now humble, meek, and reſpectful even to ſervility.

The ducheſſa, Bianca now informed Victoria, had arrived in the laſt half-hour, and was ſo much ſhocked by hearing of lady Victoria's ſhipwreck and ſubſequent dangerous illneſs, that ſhe had retired in great diſorder to another apartment to recover herſelf, and had ſent her to await the moment of her beloved niece's awaking, that ſhe might then haſten and fold her in her fond arms.

Victoria ſhrunk with terror and diſguſt from the idea of an interview: but the ducheſſa was her honoured father's ſiſter, and by him elected her guardian; and, repugnant as it was to her feelings, ſhe thought ſhe could not with propriety decline it. But too ingenuous to affect pleaſure which ſhe did not feel, ſhe coldly ſaid "ſhe was ready to receive the ducheſſa di Manfredonia." Bianca and Jeanne inſtantly after retired; and in a few moments Roſolia entered and told our trembling heroine, that the ducheſſa had arrived during her ſlumber, and that nothing could equal her conſternation on hearing who was in the château. "And who could wonder at her emotion?" continued Roſolia. "She muſt tremble at the idea of

ſeeing the dear perſecuted innocent, whom her cruelty and injuſtice drove from her, to encounter perils unparalleled. She has been fortifying herſelf againſt the interview with a potent doſe of laudanum; and was lady Victoria to take a little ſal volatile, it would not be a wrong meaſure, I think."

Victoria followed Roſolia's preſcription, and called up all the forces of her mind to ſuſtain her in the dreaded interview; for though her mind felt all the dignity and ſupport of conſcious rectitude, and that her own conduct could give birth to no unpleaſant retroſpections, yet the idea of meeting a woman who had, when laſt ſhe ſaw her, ſtood high in her eſteem and love, now ſo ſunk and degraded in the opinion of her own niece, and of all the world, gave to her delicate and feeling mind the moſt acute pain; nor could ſhe diveſt herſelf of ſome apprehenſions of being again delivered into the power of conte Vicenza by her perfidious guardian.

CHAP. V.

NEAR an hour of expectation had elapſed, when the ducheſſa appeared, leaning upon the arm of Bianca. Victoria aroſe at her entrance, but did not advance a ſingle ſtep to meet her. The ducheſſa, evidently in the utmoſt embarraſſment, approached with tottering ſteps the ſpot where dignity and innocence immoveably ſtood, in the perſon of her intereſtingly lovely, though wan and languid niece, whom ſhe folded to her boſom with a ſtrong preſſure, which ſhe hoped might be miſtaken for the ardent embrace of affection. Her air, and whole aſpect, had now loſt all that commanding ſuperiority which had hitherto ſo conſpicuouſly marked her manners and appearance. Humbled by the proclamation of her vices, ſhe trembled in the auguſt preſence of virtue, and ſunk abaſhed on the couch beſide Victoria, a hand of whom ſhe held faſt locked within her own,

and whoſe altered countenance, recent illneſs, and late calamities, ſhe deplored with all the exquiſite feeling the moſt conſummate art could teach her to aſſume; and eagerly ſhe ſtrove to overwhelm the reſentment and remembrance of injury in Victoria's gentle boſom, by an impetuous torrent of tender ſpeeches and careſſes, and all the refined adulation of an accompliſhed paraſite. But Victoria's acute perception, no longer clouded by partiality, ſoon penetrated through the veil of hypocriſy; and truly was ſhe grieved to find each moment new cauſes for deſpiſing the woman ſhe had long loved with filial fondneſs, and whom her dear deluded father had choſen for her guardian and her guide.

The ducheſſa continued about an hour with our heroine, during which time ſhe had taken particular care that her eyes ſhould never once encounter Victoria's; but with downcaſt looks ſhe ſat, fearing to meet the glances that might develop the ſecrets of her guilty ſoul.

Victoria was ſad and unhappy after this painful interview, which by no means leſſened her fears of her guardian's perfidy; ſo

that when her dinner was ſerved, to the great chagrin of Roſolia, ſhe could not eat: and that affectionate girl felt the moſt dreadful alarms, leſt new agitation and diſquiet ſhould again ſubdue her beloved and perſecuted lady.

Soon after dinner, Bianca brought word that the ducheſſa would take her coffee with Victoria; and very ſhortly after that diabolical woman made her appearance, with an air of infinitely leſs embarraſſment than ſhe had diſcovered in their firſt interview. When they had taken their coffee, and the domeſtics had retired, the ducheſſa entreated our heroine to gratify her by a recital of all that had befallen her ſince ſhe had ſo fatally encountered the Pyrenean banditti. Victoria inſtantly complied, and artleſsly, but energetically, recounted all the horrors and diſtreſſes ſhe had met with, ſuppreſſing only thoſe anecdotes which, by being repeated to conte Vicenza, might prove injurious to any one.

At ſome parts of this narrative the ducheſſa was really affected; at others, only aſſumed the appearance of being ſo: and

when Victoria ended her eventful tale, ſhe claſped her to her boſom, emphatically congratulating her upon her providential eſcape from ſuch unheard-of dangers and calamities; and fervently would ſhe pray, ſhe ſaid, that the remainder of her adored and angelic niece's life might be marked only by exquiſite happineſs. "But, my Victoria, my ſweet, ſeraphic, ſuffering child, tell me," ſhe continued with a ſoftened voice and inſinuating ſmile, "who is this Hippolyto, this exalted hero of your intereſting ſtory?"

"I know nothing of his family, ducheſſa, or of his connexions: I found him, by ſome ſtrange caprice of fortune, amongſt the domeſtics of that horrid caſtle, and proved him to be poſſeſſed of every virtue under heaven."

"But my Victoria," replied the ducheſſa, putting on a look of archneſs, "by the emotion of her ſweetly intelligent countenance, and by her animated energy of expreſſion, whilſt ſpeaking of this wonderful young man, diſcovers to every attentive obſerver that this being, 'poſſeſſed of every virtue under heaven,' is at leaſt

deficient in that very eſſential one called honeſty."

Victoria ſtarted in amazement; and, with a boſom glowing with indignation at ſuch an unjuſt aſperſion, was haſtening to vindicate her hero's fame, when the ducheſſa, with increaſed playfulneſs of looks and manner, continued—

"A breach of truſt can be incontestably proved upon this very worthy monsieur Hippolyto; for, while the unſuſpecting maid, truſting in his faith and honour, configned herſelf to his protection, he inſidiouſly and imperceptibly ſtole away her heart."

"Nay, now I ſee you are jeſting, ducheſſa," Victoria replied gravely, while her before pallid cheeks were animated by the moſt glowing tint of vermilion.

"Serious, on my life!" ſaid the ducheſſa.

"Heavens, ducheſſa! how could you ſuppoſe any thing ſo totally impoſſible? I ſhould be inſenſible to the attractive power of virtue, to the ſweet influence of genuine gratitude, did I not eſtimate and admire Hippolyto with all the energy of enthuſiaſm; and although I give him my friendſhip, my eſteem, my

higheſt admiration, yet for me to give my heart to Hippolyto would ſurely be ſo very contrary to Nature's dictates, that I muſt ever conſider it an utter impoſſibility:" and ſhe bent her eyes to the ground, offended and confuſed.

"Why, ſo it would, my love, if Cupid had no influence over the operations of the mind. But ſurely, Victoria, you muſt (at leaſt in theory) have long ſince known the attributes of the little urchin. Was Farinelli ſo very faſtidious as never to permit your taking leſſons from novels and romances?"

"Signora Farinelli certainly often allowed me to peruſe ſuch novels and romances as ſhe herſelf approved of."

"And ſtill ſo unlearned in the theory of love! Well then, my pretty novice, I muſt inſtruct you, and tell you all the properties of the blind boy, who is inveſted with full power to overcome all rationality in the human mind; to wage war with Nature's ſelf; to reign lord paramount over the optics, whoſe faculties he can at pleaſure weaken or prevent; often ſportively making his votaries blind to every imperfection, or deceiving, by

the aid of his deluſive perſpectives, where every object appears perfect in beauty and virtue. And ſuch contrary forms can he make every beloved object aſſume in the eyes of thoſe he has enſnared, ſo effectually can he change black into white, and white into black, that it would be by no means extraordinary if Friendſhip, Admiration, and Gratitude had been taught by Love to lead you into his toils, and that in your eyes this negro ſhould appear a rival to Adonis. Nay, ſo ſure am I of my conjectures being well founded, that was Hippolyto to be led forth to be broken upon the wheel, for the murder of my lord——"

Victoria ſhrieked. "Juſt Heaven forbid!" ſhe cried. "Oh! ducheſſa! what horrid phantom have you conjured up to terrify me? Hippolyto broken upon the wheel?—Hippolyto!—for murder! Why, ſurely, ſurely——" Her breathing became ſo ſhort and difficult ſhe could not proceed. Fervently ſhe graſped Elvira's hand, and eagerly looked up in her face with an air of ſupplication, terror, and anxiety: but inſtantly ſhe dropped the ducheſſa's hand—a thrill of horror darted

through her heart—for on her aunt's countenance conſpicuouſly ſat an expreſſion of the moſt malignant ſatisfaction.

"Why this emotion, my ſweet love?" returned the ducheſſa, evidently diſconcerted at the marked withdrawing of Victoria's hand. "I did not ſay Hippolyto would ſuffer upon the wheel; it was only an hypotheſis to prove my——"

"But though you did not *ſay* he would ſuffer," eagerly interrupted Victoria, "is there a probability, a poſſibility, of ſuch a direful calamity?"

"I hope not," ſaid Elvira coldly: "but conquer this at preſent unneceſſary alarm." She pauſed. Victoria ſickened, and fell back upon the couch; and, had not the ducheſſa quickly applied ſome reſtoratives, ſhe muſt have fainted. To diſpel her niece's apprehenſions was next Elvira's care; and ſhe would have ſucceeded, had not a ſmile of myſterioufneſs accompanied all ſhe ſaid, which Victoria tremblingly obſerved: but, wiſhing for her aunt's abſence, ſhe affected to be compoſed, and the ducheſſa ſoon after departed for the night. As Victoria's narrative had

neceſſarily taken up much time, it was then late. Roſolia attended the moment Elvira retired, and ſtrove, by every comforting ſuggeſtion, to alleviate the affliction and apprehenſions of her lovely miſtreſs, in whoſe feeling boſom the ducheſſa's words (but more her manner) had inflicted a wound that rankled dreadfully, forbidding ſleep or peace: and the morning found her reſtleſs, unhappy, alarmed, and eagerly wiſhing for an interview with Hippolyto, to warn him of the dangers that might await him, ſhould conte Vicenza's wound prove mortal; and more impatiently than ever did ſhe long for the moment of her departure to St. Marguerite's. She had not found courage the preceding day to appriſe the ducheſſa of her intended removal; and ſhe was conſidering what method to purſue to gain her approbation to this meaſure, when that perfidious woman unexpectedly entered her apartments, with the moſt winning ſoftneſs in her whole deportment. After inquiring, with apparent maternal affection, how her beloved child had reſted, ſhe, with an engaging ſmile, continued:—

"I have had a long conference with the

holy fathers Pierre and Anſelmo this morning; when I had the ſevere mortification of learning from them, that my Victoria means to tear herſelf from me this very day."—Elvira pauſed, and Victoria faintly ſaid—

"Conſidering that I had no longer a guardian, madam, I had ſo determined and arranged before your arrival."

"But now I am here," eagerly interrupted the ducheſſa, "you will not ſurely, my ſweeteſt love, ſo precipitately deſert me. Conſider how very extraordinary it muſt appear to the domeſtics in this château, and indeed to all the world, were you to fly from hence the moment after my arrival."

Victoria found herſelf in poſſeſſion of ſufficient ſelf-command to ſuppreſs a ſarcaſm which forcibly ſuggeſted itſelf; but her eyes, not ſo amenable, darted a glance at the ducheſſa expreſſing more than language could convey. But, as a look demanded no reply, Elvira, though viſibly diſconcerted, haſtily proceeded—

"I requeſt nothing unreaſonable; for I would not for worlds, in the delicate ſtate my ſweet child is in, contradict her wiſhes. All

I ſolicit, my love, is, that you will poſtpone your intended departure for two or three days, when I will no longer oppoſe your leaving me; becauſe," and a fluſh of crimſon now deepened the rouge upon the ducheſſa's cheeks, "I ſhall then expect ſome gueſt, whom I ſhould not approve of your meeting at preſent."

Victoria, gueſſing that it was De Montfort her aunt alluded to, was pleaſed to find ſhe had ſtill ſome reſpect to the delicacy of her ward's fame; and therefore, notwithſtanding her great impatience to be gone, aſſented to Elvira's requeſt, and begged the reverend fathers might be appriſed of her retarded removal.

"I will ſettle that with father Pierre, who is ſtill here waiting to ſee his lovely patient," ſaid the ducheſſa, who, embracing Victoria for her kind acquieſcence, immediately departed; and ſoon after father Pierre was introduced, on whoſe countenance was viſible a dark lower, or thoughtful gloom, quite unuſual to it. His cheeks were fluſhed, as if from agitation; and when he addreſſed Victoria, it was with a forced ſmile, and in a

tremulous voice. He found her pulſe much quicker, and her health in no reſpect ſo good as it had been the preceding day, and with petulance he exclaimed—

"Why was I ſo infatuated as not to comply with your wiſh of removing to our holy ſiſters? The little journey could not have injured you half ſo much as the arrival of this diabolical woman has done. But if I find you are not more compoſed to-morrow, I will be arbitrary; and may the bleſſed ſaints forſake me, if I allow you longer to remain in a place not befitting innocence to dwell in!"

"I have certainly been much agitated ſince I ſaw you yeſterday, good father."

"I wonder not that your delicate frame and ſuſceptible mind ſhould be agitated by this ſhocking woman, ſince ſhe poſſeſſed power to diſcompoſe me, whom religious habits have long taught to behold with indifference all human events, except the ſufferings of my fellow-creatures. But, although ſhe had power to diſturb the ſerenity of my temper, ſhe had it not to corrupt my principles; and finding that I was not to be won by her inſi-

dious arts, ſhe has turned all her artillery againſt our brother Anſelmo. But, gentle and docile as he appears, his virtue is incorruptible."

"You alarm me beyond meaſure, holy father! What new plot can my aunt have in agitation?"

"Fear not, my daughter. The monks of St. Lewis will protect you. The extent of her plot I know not; for, on perceiving by her preface that the work ſhe was about was vile, my indignation would not ſuffer me to ſtay and hear further."

"I apprehend, good father, that there is ſome direful plot framing for the deſtruction of the amiable, gallant Hippolyto."

"There is ſomething of that kind in her head. She ordered him hither at an early hour this morning, and he has not ſince returned to St. Lewis."

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Victoria in agony of ſoul, "my fears are verified, and ſhe has given him to deſtruction."

"Be compoſed, my daughter. I ſaw and converſed with him when my indignation led me from the ducheſſa. He has no fears, and

defies her malice; therefore has assented to her proposal for his remaining here."

"For the love of heaven, good father, entreat him not to stay, but immediately to fly from France; for, should conte Vicenza's wound prove mortal, his destruction would, I fear, be inevitable."

"See him yourself, my daughter. He agrees to stay here, from the hope of seeing you; for now, under the roof of your guardian, you need no longer scruple to grant him an interview. The duchessa has had a long conference with him. He is perfectly aware of her intentions, and has much to say to you upon the subject."

"I will see him then, if possible, this morning," Victoria said; and the monk soon after took leave, promising to see her again next morning, and charging her to take some composing medicines which he would immediately send to her.

Shortly after the good monk's departure Rosolia entered, and was truly grieved to find our heroine so agitated and unhappy.

"Oh!" said Rosolia, "I wish we were safe

out of this château, where I ſuppoſe there will be no peace for my dear lady. But do, dear lady Victoria, come and take a little walk. I am ſure it will be of infinite ſervice to you, the day is ſo pleaſant; and monſieur Hippolyto ſaid it would be the beſt thing you could do, and charged me to perſuade you to it."

"What, then you have ſeen him, Roſolia?"

"Yes, madam, and have had a long converſation with him. He was ſo very anxious to hear every particular about your health and ſpirits, and he has ſuch a faſcinating manner, that I ſhould never have got away from him, only he was ſo eager that you ſhould walk! I think monſieur Hippolyto could, if he pleaſed, draw every ſecret of my heart from me, even had I crimes to reveal; and I am ſure he could ſoon make me forget the colour of his complexion, particularly when I had conſtantly in my remembrance the lovelineſs of his deeds; and he certainly is the handſomeſt negro I ever beheld. His figure is the fineſt, and his eyes and teeth

the moſt beautiful I almoſt ever ſaw. His eyes have nothing of that ſavage fierceneſs which has ever terrified me in other black people; although, indeed, I thought nothing leſs than lightning had flaſhed from them when I told him how very miſerable lady Victoria was, ſo miſerable about him, that ſhe could take neither food nor reſt ſince ſhe had reaſon to fear his ſafety would be in danger ſhould conte Vicenza's wound prove mortal. But in a moment after his eyes aſſumed the tenderneſs and ſoftneſs of a dove's; and he was ſo grieved that you ſhould ſuffer any alarm upon his account, that he entreated me to prevail upon you to let him ſee you on the terrace, that he may aſſure you he has nothing to apprehend. And wo'n't you, wo'n't you, lady Victoria, go?

Victoria was ſoon equipped for her walk, and was juſt upon the point of leaving her apartment, when Bianca made her unwiſhed-for appearance, who came to deſire Victoria would immediately attend the ducheſſa in an airing. Our much chagrined heroine wiſhed to excuſe herſelf, but in vain, as fa-

ther Pierre had ordered her to be taken out in an open carriage; and the ducheſſa, Bianca ſaid, had deſired one to be got ready on purpoſe for lady Victoria's accommodation.

CHAP. VI.

UNWILLINGLY now our heroine deſcended the ſtaircaſe, leaning upon the arm of Roſolia, whom ſhe deſired to inform Hippolyto of her diſappointment, and to aſſure him ſhe would ſee him in the evening. In the hall they were met by the ducheſſa, who conducted her reluctant niece to the carriage, where ſhe was agreeably ſurpriſed to find father Anſelmo already ſeated.

They continued their airing about two hours, during which time the converſation found no other theme than the perfections of Hippolyto. Motives of delicacy kept Victoria ſilent upon the ſubject; but the monk and Elvira ſeemed abſolutely charmed to enthuſiaſm by his conduct and manners, and appeared to find the higheſt pleaſure in talking of this phænomenon, as they termed him. On their return to the château Victoria found herſelf ſo ſubdued by fatigue, that ſhe could

not comply with the ducheſſa's wiſh for her dining with her, but was compelled to retire to her chamber to take ſome reſt; and while ſhe was drinking her coffee after dinner, Roſolia alone attended, whoſe countenance betrayed a perturbation and anxiety which Victoria eagerly inquired the reaſon of.

"I ſhall not be comfortable or happy," Roſolia replied, "until lady Victoria has left this château. Oh, how I wiſh we were ſafe with the good Benedictines!"

"What new cauſe have you for wiſhing it?" ſaid Victoria in alarm.

"Becauſe I every hour like leſs and leſs the conduct of the ducheſſa. Such repeated conferences with Bianca and Maratti can bode no good to any one."

"Heaven defend us! Is Maratti then here? What, what can be the meaning of my aunt's bringing her ſteward with her to the comte de Montfort's château?"

"The ducheſſa, like a ſorcereſs, cannot move without her familiar; and Heaven forgive me if I wrong them, lady Victoria; but I do think they are both familiar with crimes."

"From my earlieſt days," ſaid Victoria,

" I have trembled at the ſight of Maratti. He ever appeared to me like a being who had fed through life upon human calamities; and in his age, with the furrows time had traced upon his brow, was clearly told the food that nouriſhed him, with evident ſymptoms of an inſatiable appetite for more. I never beheld him, but treaſon, cruelty, and murder, aroſe to my appalled imagination; and if he is engaged in any plot againſt us we well may tremble."

" I know nothing, my dear lady, but that there has been much conſultation amongſt them; and that when I was returning from the terrace, after delivering your meſſage to monſieur Hippolyto, I met Bianca and Maratti coming out of the wood in deep and earneſt diſcourſe. On ſeeing me they ſtarted in evident confuſion, and inſtantly became ſilent, whilſt they regarded me with a ſuſpicious and inquiſitive eye."

Victoria's mind now imbibed all the apprehenſions of Roſolia, in addition to her own; and, much alarmed and perplexed, ſhe inſtantly reſolved to haſten her interview with Hippolyto, that ſhe might perſuade him

to immediate flight, and conſult with him upon the meaſures ſhe ſhould take to effect her own ſafety. Roſolia ſhe therefore diſpatched to ſummon Hippolyto into the grounds; and ſhe was equipping herſelf for her walk, when the ducheſſa, with ſtrong ſymptoms of wildneſs and deſpair in her countenance and deportment, ſuddenly ruſhed into the room, and flung herſelf into a ſeat without uttering a ſingle word.

"Merciful heaven! what can have thus agitated my aunt?" exclaimed our aſtoniſhed and alarmed heroine.

The ducheſſa made no reply, but ſat with her hands claſped, and her eyes fixed with the immoveable gaze of ſoul-harrowing deſpair. Victoria trembled. At length, deep groans burſt from Elvira's boſom, and ſhe articulated, in the moſt piteous tones of grief, ſhort ſentences, interrupted only by convulſive ſobs and ſighs.

"Poor, poor, ill-fated Polydore!—Yes, I did once adore you! Infidelity, perjury, and unkindneſs are now wiped from my remembrance. Oh, oh, my Polydore! my affection is revived; and oh, my heart! my

burſting heart! keenly, deeply, I deplore your untimely, cruel fate."

Victoria's vital warmth chilled to its ſource; and ſhe ſhook with terror. Catching Elvira's hand, feebly ſhe demanded—"Is conte Vicenza dead?"

"Yes," exclaimed the ducheſſa, roughly flinging our heroine's trembling hand from her, and ſtarting from her ſeat with terrifying wildneſs, "yes, *your deliverer* murdered him."

Victoria, claſping her hands in ſpeechless agony, caſt an eloquent look of reproach at her aunt, and ſunk into a chair almoſt deprived of reſpiration. The ducheſſa ſnatched her to her breaſt—"Forgive my phrenſy, my love, my child, my all I have now in life to reſt upon. Look up, revive, my darling, and forgive your diſtracted parent. Adoring Polydore, as I once did, can the feeling tender heart of my Victoria condemn or wonder at my agony, my diſtraction, at his dreadful fate; but ſhook as I am to the vitals of ſenſibility, do not believe that *I* accuſe the gallant Hippolyto of murder."

"Who, who does?" wildly Victoria de-

manded, ſhrinking from the ardent embraces of her aunt.

"Be compoſed, my lovely, my adored child. All may yet be well. We may have the power ſtill to reſcue him from the hands of juſtice."

"Then he is accuſed!" faltered out Victoria, almoſt annihilated by horror.

"Alas! my child, it is too true. Polydore's ſanguinary relations have done it. The dreadful account of my huſband's death, and Hippolyto's attainder, reached me by the ſame horrid meſſengers—no leſs than thoſe wretches who feed on human woes, called officers of juſtice, who have traced the unfortunate Hippolyto hither, and are come to drag him to his fate in the Baſtile."

Victoria, almoſt ſcreaming with grief and diſmay, ſunk upon her knees at the ducheſſa's feet; and as well as the anguiſh of her heart would permit, ſupplicated Elvira to ſave Hippolyto.

"Already, my love, have I done ſomething towards it; for when Maratti diſcloſed the dreadful tidings to me, I had Hippolyto privately conducted to a remote

chamber in the château, where he is now locked in, and the key in my poſſeſſion; but, alas! this can avail us little, ſince the meſſengers have the king's warrant to ſearch every part of the château and the neighbourhood."

"Well," ſaid Victoria, ſuddenly catching a glimpſe of comfort in the moment of deſpair, "and if Hippolyto is brought to trial he muſt be acquitted. I was the only witneſs upon the dreadful occaſion, and my ſingle teſtimony will prove his innocence."

"Alas, my child! you talk like an artleſs being, unſkilled in the wickedneſs of this depraved world. Power can ever in France ſilence juſtice. Conte Vicenza's friends are powerful and numerous: poor Hippolyto is a ſtranger and friendleſs."

"My preſerver cannot want numerous and powerful friends while the illuſtrious family of Arioſto live," ſaid Victoria haughtily.

"Certainly, was your brother here; but you forget how many leagues diſtance he is from hence, and not now the maſter of his own time; and you are not aware, my love,

of the corruption practiſed in the Baſtile: Hippolyto, on the inſtant of his arrival there, may be brought to trial, and execution may take place on the moment of condemnation."

Victoria, burſting into an agony of tears, again, with all the energy her ardent feelings inſpired, ſupplicated the ducheſſa to befriend Hippolyto.

"Should I conceal Hippolyto," ſaid Elvira, "and ſcreen him from the fangs of juſtice, ſhould I not irreparably injure my own fame, and criminate myſelf. It was but too generally known the unhappy terms on which my late lord and I for a length of time lived; and was I to protect his murderer, as Hippolyto is unjuſtly denominated, what would the world ſay of me?"

"Alas! I know not," replied Victoria, "what the world might *ſay*; but I ſhould *think* the man who repeatedly hazarded his life to deliver your orphan niece from the cruel atrocious plot formed to deſtroy her every hope of happineſs merited at leaſt protection from you, who ſolemnly promiſed my father, in the laſt moments of his life, to

be my guardian, my guide, a foſtering parent to me; and think, think, ducheſſa, that ſtill from high my anxious father, your tender friend and brother, narrowly obſerves you, to ſee how well, how conſcientiouſly, you execute the ſacred truſt he confided to your care."

The countenance of the ducheſſa underwent a marked variety of changes during this ſhort ſpeech, emphatically delivered. Shame, guilt, and irreſolution, were conſpicuouſly blended, with other diſguiſed expreſſions of dark and myſterious meaning. At length, after an intereſting pauſe, during which Victoria keenly obſerved her, it ſuddenly aſſumed the character of cold and ſtern inflexibility—and, with a voice which proclaimed her ſteady to her purpoſe, ſhe ſaid—

"Unneceſſary is further entreaty; ſince it is in your appropriate power, and yours alone, to ſave Hippolyto from an immediate and an ignominious death."

"In mine!" exclaimed the dreadfully agitated and aſtoniſhed Victoria: "explain; name but the means, that I may fly to ſecure his ſafety."

An awful pauſe enſued, which at length the ducheſſa broke, in a quick, but hollow, tone.

" Promiſe, ſolemnly promiſe, as your ſoul hopes to find eternal peace hereafter in the realms of endleſs bliſs, with both your virtuous parents, to become to-morrow morning the wife of Hippolyto. Promiſe this to me, and the proſecution againſt his life ſhall inſtantly ceaſe. I am authoriſed to tell you ſo."

Victoria, with a look of mingled amazement and contempt, aroſe from the ducheſſa's feet; and, calmly taking a ſeat oppoſite to her, after a ſhort interval of ſilence, in which her intelligent countenance eloquently expreſſed her feelings, ſhe ſpoke with dignity and firmneſs.

" I am, 'tis true, but young in years; and in knowledge of the world much younger ſtill; yet I am not ſo much a child, or ſo great a novice in the machinery which actuates human views and human events, not clearly to perceive that my becoming the wife of Hippolyto cannot be the project of conte Vicenza's relations, unleſs to cut off my evi-

dence, which can be of no consequence, if my marriage with him is to save him from persecution; and such inconsistency must lead me to believe that no sanguinary plot has been formed against Hippolyto by conte Vicenza's friends. Ah, no! this most extraordinary and inexplicable project has, alas! I fear, been the work of those who ought to blush at forming or combining in any plots inimical to the interest or happiness of the late conte Arioſto's child. But let me take the liberty of requesting the ducheſſa di Manfredonia to inform those who employed her upon an embaſſy so disgraceful to her, and insulting to me, that Victoria di Modena feels most properly her obligations for the alliance so suited to her birth, which with such parental tenderness they have endeavoured to form for her; but that highly as she estimates the virtues and services of Hippolyto, enthusiastic as she owns her gratitude and admiration are, she is not to be duped by such a puerile plot, or terrified into a marriage with a stranger, whose birth, connections, or history, are unknown to her. But even was she, in the enthusiasm of her gratitude, so far to

forget the dignity of that illuſtrious houſe from which ſhe ſprung, as to accede to ſuch a degrading propoſition, the ducheſſa di Manfredonia, feeling, as ſhe muſt feel, the duty of a guardian, would oppoſe ſo improper an alliance, and, in reſpect and gratitude to her late brother's memory, exert her utmoſt power to ſave his child from ruin and his houſe from diſhonour."

"Are theſe your real ſentiments?" ſaid the ducheſſa, almoſt ſuffocating with rage.

"They are," replied Victoria with firmneſs. "My fears upon Hippolyto's account are now diſſipated, and the influence of terror no longer deſtroys the faculties of judgment. The ſtory of conte Vicenza's death I muſt believe a phantom, conjured up to delude; and feel convinced, that no one dares, or has the power, to touch the life of Hippolyto."

"Your reſidence, child, in the caſtle of the Pyrenean brigands has certainly deranged your intellects," ſaid the ducheſſa, endeavouring to appear compoſed.

"No, ducheſſa," Victoria replied; "my early acquaintance with miſery and misfor-

tune has arranged my intellects, to see, with optics much too clear for my repose, cruel foes in those whom by nature and law I had a right to claim protection from:" and her voice faltering as she approached her period, she burst into tears.

"Well," said Elvira, with the voice, gestures, and countenance of baleful implacable revenge—"well, and since you have learned to see your foes, learn also to beware their vengeance for your insults. What they have threatened they dare perform; and whether you choose to admit the authenticity of conte Vicenza's *murder* or not, your deliverer, whom you thus *gratefully* abandon to his fate, is in the hands of those whom your sagacity terms your foes; and you may prepare your crystalline optics to view him, ere many hours ensue, distended upon the wheel of torture a bleeding mangled corpse, sentenced to that doom by you for whom he did so much. The officers of justice are within call, and dare, and have the power, to lead him to immediate execution."

Terror and grief again assailed Victoria with accumulated torture from this short sus-

penſion; and ſhe threw herſelf once more, in all the agony of the moſt acute mental ſuffering, at the ducheſſa's feet, to implore and plead; but that diabolical woman, ſpurning her thence, inſtantly aroſe, and, with the ghaſtly ſmile of malignant triumph, ſaid—

"I once told you the only means of ſaving the life of your preſerver, and of crowning him with riches, honours, happineſs; but the imperious and penetrating Victoria di Modena rejected it not only with ſcorn and indignation, but with inſult to thoſe whoſe power ſhe braved and doubted; and ſoon ſhall ſhe have cauſe to thank her own erring and haughty ſpirit for accelerating a calamity that only threatened at a diſtance; for before this hour to-morrow ſhe ſhall be preſented with fatal proof, that there are thoſe who have power, and were dared by her, to touch the life of Hippolyto." Then, with ſtern vengeance on her brow, and ſwift-winged malice brooding in her brain, ſhe ruſhed out of the apartment. Victoria would have followed, to promiſe every thing to inſure Hippolyto's ſafety, but ſhe poſſeſſed not

power to move; and extended upon the floor in a ſtate of agitation almoſt too much for her fragile frame to ſuſtain was ſhe found in ſome time after by Roſolia, who, as well as her concern and alarm would permit, exerted herſelf to compoſe the lovely ſufferer.

By broken ſentences and apoſtrophes that burſt from Victoria, Roſolia ſoon learned the cauſe of her agoniſing perturbation, and deeply felt the cruelty of her ſituation, without being able to afford her any advice or conſolation. Her gratitude to, and admiration of, Hippolyto were extreme; and ſhe could not endure the thoughts of any evil befalling him; nor yet could ſhe brook the dreadful idea of her beautiful, accompliſhed, and high-born lady becoming the wife of an obſcure negro. All poor Roſolia could do, then, was to heave ſigh for ſigh, and ſhed tear for tear, with her afflicted lady, and to unite with her in prayers to Heaven for ſuccour.

At length Victoria thought of Diego, who had proved himſelf ſuch an able and willing friend to her. "Go, dear Roſolia," ſaid ſhe, "and bring my good Diego to me.

He will extricate me from this ſtate of horror, if ſenſe, prudence, attachment, and courage can do it.'

Roſolia hung her head in evident embarraſſment. Victoria caught new alarm; and Roſolia haſtened to inform her that Diego was no longer in the château. "That," ſaid ſhe, "was amongſt my reaſons, to-day, for wiſhing us removed to St. Marguerite's; but I did not like to tell you all my cauſes of alarm at once. Francis informed me that the ducheſſa, thinking the illneſs which ſtill hangs about Diego is a diſordered mind, ſent him early this morning to the Carthuſian convent, for the monks to reaſon him into health; nor would ſhe permit him to ſee you before his departure, although he earneſtly ſupplicated for that indulgence."

"Was Diego's benefit her real motive, I ſhould thank her for his removal; but, alas! I fear it was ſolely to deprive me of the only friend who could aſſiſt me now;" and bitterly ſhe wept at the peculiar forlornneſs of her ſituation, and at the confirmation of evil which Diego's ſecret removal but too plainly told.

"But, my dear lady," ſaid the ſympathiſing Roſolia, "weep not for this. St. Lewis's is within our reach; and, if you think Diego's preſence can afford you even one gleam of comfort, I will myſelf bring him to you."

Victoria thankfully and eagerly accepted the offer of Roſolia, who inſtantly ſet out to bring, if poſſible, father Pierre as well as Diego to the château; and during the interval of her abſence, the mind of our heroine was agitated with ſo many painful emotions, ſuch quick tranſitions of hopes and fears, that we cannot attempt the delineation of her feelings. At length Roſolia, chagrined and ſad, appeared alone.

"What," ſaid Victoria mournfully, "and would they not come to me?"

"Alas, lady Victoria! I have not been at the convent at all I got out of the château, as I thought, without obſervation: and had ran about half-way to St. Lewis's when Maratti overtook me, and ſavagely dragged me back to the château, in ſpite of all my ſtruggles and remonſtrances; and in my hearing he has given orders to the porter not

to let me out of the château until he gives leave. But the worſt part of my ſtory is," continued ſhe, burſting into tears, "that juſt as we approached the houſe I ſaw that wretch Bianca emerging from a thick part of the wood, in earneſt conference with two men, with whom ſhe entered the château by a private door. I had a full view of the men; and they ſo much reſembled bravos, that I am certain they are come upon ſome ſanguinary purpoſe."

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Victoria, in an agony of grief and conſternation, "then Hippolyto's life is too truly in danger, and if I longer heſitate it may be too late to ſave him. Would to heaven that I could ſee father Pierre! he would act, would think for me. Run, fly, Roſolia, to François; diſpatch him to the convent; tell him I am taken dangerouſly ill, and muſt this inſtant ſee the holy father. It is no untruth, my Roſolia, for I am ſick at heart. Perſuade, bribe François to go immediately, if you love me, Roſolia."

Roſolia inſtantly diſappeared; and Victoria, in a dreadful tumult of ſpirits, ſunk

upon her knees, and fervently implored the protection of heaven for Hippolyto. In about twenty minutes Rosolia returned, pale, trembling, breathless.

"Heaven defend us!" exclaimed Victoria, alarmed almost to phrensy, "what does this evident dismay portend?"

"Oh, poor monsieur Hippolyto!" faintly articulated Rosolia, her teeth smiting each other as she spoke: "alas, what is become of him!"

"Torture me not to madness by this suspense," exclaimed Victoria: "tell me, I conjure you, tell me all that has occasioned this dreadful agitation."

"On going from hence," replied Rosolia, whose excessive tremor scarcely allowed her power to speak, and she was forced to pause between every sentence, "I had just reached the top of a staircase, when on the first landing below me I caught a glimpse of Maratti in deep consultation with those horrid men I saw with Bianca. I instantly stopped and crouched down, with a hope of hearing what they were talking about, but not one word reached me. At last they all

began to descend the staircase; and so did I, still keeping them in view, but continuing at a proper distance for concealment. At length they turned into a long dark passage, which I knew led to the part of the château where Jeanne told me monsieur Hippolyto is confined. Terrified for him, I instantly resolved to follow them. I did so, cautiously, led on by the sound of their footsteps, and crept after them upon my hands and knees, to prevent my being seen, up a small staircase, where once I was quite sure I was detected, as I thought, when Maratti turned suddenly round, that his eyes rested upon mine; but fortunately I was mistaken, for on he went with his companions, until they reached a gallery leading to several chambers, where they stopped; and after I had concealed myself behind a pillar of the first doorcase I came to, I saw Maratti take a dagger from his bosom and present it to one of the men; when distinctly I heard him say, although he spoke in a cautious whisper, 'The point is touched with a quick and subtile poison, and will do this business effectually.—'"

Victoria's ſenſes ſickened, and ſhe almoſt ceaſed to reſpire. "Go on," ſaid ſhe, panting with horrid expectation.

"——Then pointing to a door," continued Roſolia, "'That is the chamber of your victim,' ſaid the ſanguinary wretch; 'and immediately after the convent bell tolls at one, ſend his black ſoul to join his kindred devils.'"

"'This mode,' ſaid one of the bravos in the moſt ſoul-harrowing voice I ever heard, 'this mode will ſpare us the trouble of dragging him to the Baſtile, and the ceremony of trial; but would it not afford more ample vengeance to the widow of the conte to ſee her huſband's murderer broke alive upon the rack?'"

"'Why no,' returned Maratti; 'her niece is under obligations to him, and the ducheſſa would therefore ſpare him the pangs of torture, and ſends him a lifeleſs body to be cruſhed upon the wheel.'"

"'But why may we not diſpatch him now?' ſaid the other aſſaſſin; 'there is no one to obſerve us.'

"'Becauſe,' replied Maratti, 'that it is

the ducheſſa's pleaſure to have the deed perpetrated after midnight, when all eyes and ears will be cloſed by ſleep, and when, unobſerved, you can convey the body hence; but in the intermediate time, leſt any one ſhould hold intercourſe with him, you muſt keep watch here, with loaded piſtols, and ſeize all who approach his chamber;' and he then opened the door of a room contiguous to that in which was confined the poor devoted monſieur, through which they all cautiouſly entered,—and I returned hither."

CHAP. VII.

VICTORIA was now almoſt convulſed by horror and deſpair. "So, then," ſhe wildly exclaimed, "he is given up to deſtruction; and I, vile ungrateful wretch that I am, I ſealed the doom of my gallant preſerver—of Hippolyto; but do not, do not, cruel Roſolia, tell me it is too late to ſave him. I will brave his aſſaſſins. I will fly to him; I will alarm the houſe, the neighbourhood. Alas! alas! what will that avail me, but to accelerate his murder? Hippolyto's murder!"—ſhe ſhrieked, ſhe burſt into the bittereſt tears of agoniſing horror and deſpair. Her tears reſtored her fleeting ſenſes. She wept abundantly, and her mental powers at length reſumed their functions.

"Roſolia," ſaid Victoria after a painful pauſe, "a woman ſo deeply verſed in crimes as the ducheſſa muſt ſurely be ſo in ſtratagems, and ſhe yet can ſave Hippolyto from

theſe fiends of civil law. Fly then to her, Roſolia, if you love me, and promiſe all things for me that can ſave Hippolyto. But ſtay; your word may be doubted, it may not be deemed ſufficiently deciſive, and I had better render my promiſe indiſputable." Haſtily our agitated heroine ſnatched up a pen, and with much difficulty traced a few almoſt illegible lines addreſſed to the ducheſſa di Manfredonia.

" Nothing can ſave the life of Hippolyto but my complying with the wiſhes of my guardian, I have been told by her. Truly would I yield my life, my liberty, my all of happineſs, to ſave him. Solemnly, then, I promiſe to become his wife to-morrow. Unmurmuring will I accede to any propoſition that can ſecure him from deſtruction."

" Victoria di Modena."

With this almoſt unintelligible billet ſhe inſtantly diſpatched the trembling Roſolia, the moments of whoſe abſence were not ſo miſerable to Victoria as thoſe ſhe had paſſed for the laſt few hours. She had now, ſhe

conceived, performed her duty to gratitude and humanity, and ſhe felt almoſt compoſed and comparatively happy; for well ſhe knew that, whatever were the myſterious motives which inſpired Elvira's wiſhes for this extraordinary union, they were ſo powerful, that ſhe would eagerly embrace her acquieſcence, and exert herſelf to extricate Hippolyto from danger. Her expectations ſoon were verified; for, as quickly as poſſible, Roſolia returned with the following anſwer from the ducheſſa.

"Every apprehenſion for Hippolyto's ſafety may ceaſe from this moment; nor let a fear obtrude of his being repugnant to, or intimidated into, the projected union.

"Be ready at eight o'clock to-morrow morning, attended by Roſolia, to accompany me to the church of St. Lewis, where we ſhall be received by the enraptured Hippolyto and the pious father Anſelmo, who ſhall perform the nuptial benediction. After the awful ceremony you will all return to the château, to give me the pleaſure of your company at breakfaſt; but at twelve I ſhall

wiſh your long projected journey to St. Marguerite's to take place, and where I would have you continue until my plans for your future eſtabliſhment are arranged.

"Elvira Manfredonia Vicenza."

Victoria peruſed this billet, which ſeemed to fix her doom, with aſtoniſhing compoſure; nay, with a kind of heroic ſatisfaction caught from the reflexion, that although ſhe was to be the ſacrifice, ſhe would evince the greatneſs of her gratitude, and ſave, in her turn, the life of her amiable preſerver. But not ſo compoſed was Roſolia; for bitterly ſhe wept at the ſacrifice that deep plotting art and cruelty had forced her lovely miſtreſs to make, who now, to reconcile poor Roſolia to Fate's inevitable decree, entered into a more minute detail of all that had occurred to her, from the commencement of her captivity until the moment of her taking ſhelter in comte de Montfort s château, than ſhe had heretofore done;—and when her narrative was ended, ſhe found her own mind charmed to enthuſiaſm by a retroſpection of Hippolyto's virtues, and calm

and contented at the proſpect of their intended union; while Roſolia, almoſt as much delighted with the heroiſm of her lady's preſerver, felt a conſiderable abatement of reluctance to the propoſed marriage; nay, would have been abſolutely pleaſed at the event (although ſhe herſelf had been forming, in her wiſhes, an alliance for Victoria) could Hippolyto but change the tint of his complexion.

Victoria's narrative brought the night almoſt to its termination; when Roſolia recollected that it was neceſſary to make ſome arrangement for her lady's dreſs the ſubſequent morning: but ſmall was the ſcope her fancy had to ſelect the bridal garments from, as it was her own wardrobe that was to ſupply them, as it had already done Victoria's dreſs ſince her ſhipwreck; our heroine having had no opportunity to purchaſe a wardrobe of her own, or to get any thing belonging to her from conte Vicenza's château. With a heavy heart Roſolia now prepared her own beſt cambric gown and the prime of all her linen for her beloved lady,

who could not but ſenſibly feel the mortification of her own forlorn and extraordinary ſituation. Where was now the nuptial pomp which Fate had promiſed to conte Arioſto s daughter? Reared up in all the ſplendid luxury of rank and brilliant expectations, ſhe now was doomed, by the villany of her guardian, to be indebted to her own domeſtic for her bridal garments, and forced into a clandeſtine union with an obſcure man, a ſtranger to herſelf and family. She felt herſelf the outcaſt of her houſe, a victim to the crimes of others; and, with tears of anguiſh, ſhe bitterly deplored her cruel deſtiny; until her genuine piety aroſe to huſh her murmurs, and to lead her mind to fortitude and reſignation. She wiped her tears away, and a ſoft, but melancholy ſmile, again diffuſed its plaintive ſweetneſs over her intereſtingly lovely countenance.

The château clock at length ſtruck one. Victoria ſtarted in horror, and her varying cheeks hung out the ghaſtly enſigns of fear. Roſolia, too, was infected by alarm. The convent bell ſtruck up a diſmal knell. It

had been the ſignal for murder—for Hippolyto's murder. Had the diabolical decree been revoked? Perhaps the ducheſſa's billet was only a deluſion to lull apprehenſion; Victoria breathed ſhort; her heart throbbed with painful violence. She graſped Roſolia's arm. She could not ſpeak; but Roſolia perfectly underſtood her meaning, and, inſtantly taking up a light—

"Be compoſed, my dear lady," ſaid ſhe, "I will go ſee that all is ſafe; and watch by his door until morning."

Roſolia moved to go, and Victoria, continuing her graſp, moved with her.

"Does lady Victoria mean to accompany me?"

"I do," Victoria falteringly articulated: "Theſe bravos might murder you too, my Roſolia, did not I appear to protect you; and how could I ſupport the interval of ſuſpenſe, uncertain of your fate, as well as his?"

"Well then," ſaid Roſolia, ſtriving to wear the appearance of cheerfulneſs foreign to her heart, as ſhe gently opened the door, "ſhould we meet any of the family, we can

tell them you walk the houſe at this unſeaſonable hour through a raſh vow you made the night of your ſhipwreck."

Softly and tremulouſly they trod the way to Hippolyto's chamber. On entering the gallery leading to it their fears increaſed to tortures. Every ſenſation of horror Victoria had experienced in Don Manuel's caſtle now aſſailed her with renovated force; and when, on approaching the chamber which Roſolia pointed to as Hippolyto's, ſhe ſaw the door of it open, no words can expreſs the anguiſh of her heart, and, ſubdued by agoniſing apprehenſion, ſhe ſunk almoſt breathleſs upon the floor. Roſolia, more herſelf, ruſhed impetuouſly into the room, which now was vacant. Minutely ſhe ſearched around. No Hippolyto—no trace of murder could ſhe ſee, and concluded that the ducheſſa was faithful to her promiſe, and that he was returned to St. Lewis, to be there in readineſs for the morning's awful ceremony

Her conjectures and intelligence Roſolia haſtily communicated to Victoria, who, revived and comforted, aroſe from the ground,

and, ſupported by Roſolia, looked into the room, to convince herſelf the affectionate girl's ſtatement was juſt. In turning from this now deſerted chamber, Roſolia obſerved the door of the room, into which Maratti had conducted the bravos, a-jar. Her wiſh to tranquilliſe her beloved lady's mind lent her courage, and ſhe inſtantly entered to ſearch that alſo. She found it to be an unoccupied bed-room, and in it ſhe quickly diſcovered a dagger lying on a table, which ſhe conjectured was that ſhe had ſeen Maratti give to the aſſaſſins. Carefully ſhe examined the point; and finding it to all appearance guiltleſs of blood, ſhe flew with it to Victoria, who hoped it was a proof that the fatal deed had not been perpetrated; but fearing to leave it there, ſhe took it from Roſolia, and carried it with her to her own chamber, which they reached unmoleſted—ſtill in painful anxiety reſpecting the fate of Hippolyto. There was nothing to confirm their hopes of his being gone back to the convent. Might he not have been removed to ſome more ſecret part of the château; and might not the aſſaſſin be ſupplied with other weapons

of death beſide that ſhe had found. Theſe ideas gave birth to ſo many new horrors, that Roſolia propoſed going to learn from Jeanne if Hippolyto was really returned to St. Lewis.

" It is very probable that Jeanne knows," continued ſhe, " and if ſhe does I know ſhe will tell me; but, before I go, I muſt prevail upon my dear lady to take ſome of this compoſing medicine." She now took up a phial which had been ſent late in the evening from St. Lewis; and while, according to uſual cuſtom, ſhe was ſhaking it preparatory to pouring it out, a paper fell to the ground which had been warily concealed within the label. Roſolia, no longer mindful of the medicine ſhe had been about to adminiſter, haſtily picked up what ſhe ſaw was a written paper, and, with infinite ſatisfaction, read aloud :—

" The beſt compoſing medicine which we can adminiſter to our intereſting patient before her hour of reſt, is an aſſurance that her preſerver, Hippolyto, is returned in ſafety to our convent, where, in perfect ſecurity,

he will pafs this night; and let our daughter come to the church of St. Lewis to-morrow morning with confidence and hope, fince there, through the mercy of Heaven, fhe will find a termination to all her cruel perfecutions, and permanent protection from her guilty foes."

Victoria found this a balm that diftilled fweet peace and comfort to her tortured heart and agitated fpirits; and after paying her juft tribute of thankfgiving to her merciful Creator, and invoking his future protection, fhe, with Rofolia, who flept in the fame room, retired to reft. When Rofolia laid her head upon her pillow, it was in the firm hope that the billet from the convent implied the intervention of fomething to prevent the union fhe was fo averfe to; and Victoria fell into a tranquil flumber, in the firm belief that whatever heaven decrees is for the ultimate good of its creatures, who ought not only to meet its wife difpenfations with refignation, but with gratitude.

Between fix and feven Rofolia fprung from her bed to affift her lovely miftrefs in

dreſſing for the ſolemn event which was faſt approaching. But Victoria would not dedicate much time to the taſk of adorning, having what ſhe conſidered a much more important buſineſs to ſettle with her Creator. Yet notwithſtanding her inattention to her appearance, ſhe looked, in the ſimple and unſtudied garments of Roſolia, moſt intereſtingly lovely; while, in deſpite of her reliance upon heaven, a tear of reluctance gliſtened in her eyes, and a fluſh of timid awful apprehenſion animated her cheeks.

The hour which the ducheſſa had appointed for meeting was nearly arrived, when Victoria recollected the picture ſhe had, with her own trinkets, brought in her pockets from Don Manuel's caſtle; and, without beſtowing one parting look upon it, leſt it ſhould prove to the diſadvantage of Hippolyto, ſhe folded it in ſeveral papers, which ſhe carefully ſealed, reſolving never more to behold it, and, on the firſt poſſible opportunity, to reſtore it to its owner; as now voluntarily to retain it in her poſſeſſion ſhe conſidered would be a crime againſt the

man whom ſhe was ſo ſhortly to plight her vows to; and giving it to Roſolia, ſhe directed her to put it up with thoſe things they purpoſed taking to St. Marguerite's with them.

A few moments before eight Bianca requeſted admiſſion, at ſight of whom Victoria's firmneſs almoſt entirely forſook her. She had ever diſliked Bianca; but her having ſo cruelly conſigned her amiable ſiſter Octavia to the murderer's power had converted that diſlike into deteſtation, and ſhe now beheld her as the harbinger of evil. She came to announce, that the ducheſſa was waiting for Victoria in the wood leading to St. Lewis.

Our trembling heroine, leaning on the arm of the trembling Roſolia, followed Bianca to a private path in the wood, where the ducheſſa and Maratti were waiting. At the ſight of theſe execrable fiends, Victoria's fears and agitations dreadfully augmented, nor was Elvira without her ſhare of viſible emotion. She ſpoke not; but, taking the chilled and paſſive hand of her devoted victim from Roſolia, drew it through her own

arm; and ſilently and gloomily they were conducted by Maratti to the convent church, where they were all inſtantly admitted by a lay-brother, and received by father Anſelmo, who led them in awful ſilence to the altar; where ſtood Hippolyto, plainly but elegantly attired, attended by poor Thomas, and as much agitated as his deſtined bride.

The ducheſſa, in a hurried and hollow voice, bade father Anſelmo proceed; and the moment Victoria beheld Hippolyto placed by her ſide, and heard the holy father pronounce the firſt words of the nuptial ceremony, her recollection totally forſook her, and ſhe ſaw not the agitation of Hippolyto, or the guilty working of her perfidious guardian's countenance. She heard not the hyſteric ſobbings of poor Roſolia, nor the marriage benediction, firmly and piouſly delivered by the devout father Anſelmo: nor did ſhe clearly comprehend any thing that was paſſing until after the awful ceremony was ended, and the veſtry buſineſs completed; when, returning through the wood, and the gentle breeze of the morning, and the

well-known soothing voice of Hippolyto recalled her to perception, as he tenderly supported her to the château, whither the ducheſſa had invited him and father Anſelmo to accompany them.

CHAP. VIII.

When Victoria recovered her ſenſes ſufficiently to know her doom was fixed, and that ſhe was irrevocably the wife of Hippolyto, ſhe would have found conſiderable relief by indulging in a flood of tears that was forcing its paſſage to calm her agitated breaſt; but reflecting that tears, by implying a repugnance to their union, might wound the feelings of her generous, gallant deliverer, ſhe exerted her utmoſt endeavours to reſtrain them; and effectually to do ſo, ſhe knew ſhe muſt not attempt to ſpeak; and therefore continued ſilent to all the ſoothing tenderneſs of Hippolyto, who led her to the ſaloon, where an elegant breakfaſt was prepared, and where he ſeated himſelf beſide her; but ſtill ſhe ſpoke not, fearing the effect might ſubdue the little ſhare of firmneſs ſhe had acquired.

The ducheſſa had, with father Anſelmo, taken a ſeat at ſome diſtance from the ſad bride, evidently uncomfortable in her own hypocritical taſk, and heartily repenting the difficult and diſagreeable part ſhe had given herſelf to perform, by not having arranged for her niece's departure to St. Marguerite's immediately after the nuptial ceremony had been pronounced; but as ſhe had undertaken the part, ſhe exerted herſelf to ſuſtain it, with all that conſummate art ſhe was miſtreſs of; and, with a countenance of perfect eaſe and an air that ſpoke unconſciouſneſs of guilt, ſhe calmly fell into converſation with the holy man.

At length Roſolia entered with a glaſs of ſal volatile and water, which ſhe preſented to Victoria, who, on beholding the pretty and intelligent countenance of Roſolia ſwelled and disfigured with exceſſive weeping for her, burſt into tears, which continued to flow for ſome minutes before ſhe could collect ſufficient mental power to ſubdue them; when, eagerly ſwallowing the ſal volatile, and haſtily wiping away the cryſtal drops, ſhe

turned to Hippolyto with a ſoft bewitching ſmile, and looked upon him for the firſt time ſince their union.

" Think not, Hippolyto," ſhe ſaid—and low and tremulouſly ſhe ſpoke—" think not that I weep becauſe I am your wife. No, believe me; it is the manner of our union that diſtreſſes me, that wounds my heart, my every feeling of delicacy, to the very quick."

Roſolia, through reſpect and fearing to truſt her firmneſs in hearing more, haſtily retreated; and Hippolyto, affected almoſt to tears, took Victoria's hand, on which he had ſo lately placed the little token of their plighted vows, and with the moſt impaſſioned energy he ſpoke—

" And believe me, lady Victoria, the man to whom your vows were given, when wreſted from you, is not villain enough to refuſe the reſtoration of thoſe compulſatory vows the moment you demand them. The laws of this country (defective as they are) can never conſider thoſe vows binding which are extorted by terror and compaſſion from a minor; and it will therefore be in

your own power, at a future period, to annul this marriage, ſhould I prove ſo unfortunate as to find ſuch your wiſh; and I ſhould not, believe me, have ſubmitted by paſſiveneſs to become a party in this cruel plot of torturing and working upon the moſt exquiſite feelings of ſuſceptibility, but to extricate you from the power and machinations of thoſe whom I well knew were unworthy of the valuable truſt repoſed in their honour. No other method was mine of wreſting you from inevitable deſtruction; and though harſh my remedy, perhaps you may forgive me, when you ſhall learn how deep was the ſource from which my conduct ſprung."

Victoria heard Hippolyto with that candour he ſo juſtly merited, and fully was ſhe convinced that it never could be her wiſh to give him one moment of uneaſineſs; and ſhe was about to ſpeak what a ſweet expreſſive ſmile anticipated, when Elvira ſummoned them to the breakfaſt table.

The bride and bridegroom were merely ſpectators of the repaſt; although our heroine's mental ſtrength ſeemed each mo-

ment to augment, and ſhe appeared ſerene and reſigned, if not happy. Tenderneſs, reſpect, and admiration, ſtrongly marked Hippolyto's manner to Victoria; while to the ducheſſa his deportment was viſibly tinctured with contempt and averſion, which his ſituation could not juſtify, nor his politeneſs even conceal.

Breakfaſt was ended, and the domeſtics juſt departed, when one of them haſtily returned and announced the arrival of comte de Montfort.

The expreſſion that inſtantly diffuſed itſelf over the ducheſſa's countenance was difficult to define. It ſeemed openly to evince ſhame, mortification, and chagrin, blended with a myſterious kind of ſatisfaction ill according with the revealed emotions of her face. In the moment of ſurpriſe ſhe loſt her uſual ſelf-poſſeſſion, and haſtily exclaimed—

"Heavens! how unlucky! Let him not come hither."

"The comte is already here," ſaid the domeſtic, throwing the door wide open. "My lord has juſt entered the antichamber."

Elvira ſtarted from her ſeat, and, with a hurrying motion of her hand, pointed to another door. "Holy father," ſaid ſhe, "will you and Hippolyto have the goodneſs to retire for a few moments into that room; I will hereafter aſſign reaſons for this requeſt, that will excuſe the liberty I take."

They inſtantly complied with her wiſhes, and the door cloſed upon them at the moment De Montfort entered the ſaloon.

Victoria's delicacy bade her depart, and ſhe had haſtily ariſen to go, but the ducheſſa inſiſted upon her ſtay.

Comte de Montfort advanced with an empaſſioned air to Elvira, and gallantly took her hand; but at that moment perceiving Victoria, he flung the ducheſſa's hand in horror from him; and, pale and trembling, he for ſome moments ſtood gazing in ſpeechleſs amazement.

"Gracious powers!" he at length exclaimed, "and do I indeed behold lady Victoria di Modena?" He rapidly advanced towards her, then ſuddenly ſtopping, hung his head in ſhame and ſorrow, and, reproachfully addreſſing Elvira, he continued—"Oh!

ducheſſa, why, why did you tell me that ſhe was loſt to my eager purſuit for ever; that ſhe was gone, by her own expreſs deſire, to take the veil in a convent far diſtant, the name and ſituation of which you had ſolemnly vowed never to diſcloſe, until it was too late for your profligate huſband to trepan her into his power?—and yet I ſee her here, and not even in the habit of a noviciate. For what was this cruel deception practiſed? Oh! ducheſſa, why was I doomed by your duplicity a victim to unceaſing wretchedneſs?" His voice now faltered; tears guſhed from his eyes; his whole frame appeared convulſed; and he ſunk, overpowered by agitation, into a chair.

Elvira now, with an air of calm effrontery, aſtoniſhing to the guiltleſs Victoria, replied—" I told you truly that my niece had left me to go into a convent; but on her way thither, by the contrivance, as it appears to me, of conte Vicenza, ſhe unfortunately fell into the power of a banditti who infeſt the Pyrenees." The ducheſſa now ſketched a ſlight outline of Victoria's

adventures in Spain, her subsequent shipwreck, and taking refuge in that château; and concluded with saying—" and now De Montfort prepare to hear the most wonderful incident of this eventful narrative. This Hippolyto, who so gallantly rescued my darling girl from impending destruction, possessed sufficient influence to overcome her religious propensities, and is now her husband."

The comte, who had been dreadfully agitated during the ducheſſa's recital, now starting in horror and amazement from his seat, exclaimed—" A negro, the husband of Victoria!"

" Yes comte, Victoria di Modena, who so firmly rejected the comte de Montfort, is now the wife of an obscure negro."

" I will not believe it," De Montfort replied, trembling with dismay and astonishment. " I cannot believe the dreadful intelligence.—No, no, ducheſſa, 'tis a horrid sprite you have conjured up to torture further the wretched victim of your deceptions."

Elvira's darkening brow for a moment threatened a ſtorm; but quickly recovering her ſelf-command, ſhe ſmiled maliciouſly.

"Ah! i ſee by your ſmiling that you are in jeſt, ducheſſa," ſaid the agitated De Montfort; "but why am I to be tortured by ſuch barbarous jeſts? Do I deſerve ſuch cruelty from you? Oh! no, no, you knew too well the ſituation of my heart before you hurled me down the precipice that has deſtroyed me. Lady Victoria, may I, dare I, preſume to apply to you, to learn if I am of every hope bereft?"

A ſtorm now gathered upon the ducheſſa's brow that inſtantly burſt forth with dreadful violence. Frantically ſhe flew to the door of Hippolyto's retreat.—"Since you wiſh for other teſtimony than my aſſertions," ſaid ſhe, almoſt convulſed with rage, "you ſhall have immediate conviction." Then throwing open the door, her countenance underwent a ſudden and conſpicuous change. The fire of rage turned to the dark gloom of vengeance, an expreſſion of malicious triumph gleamed in a horrid ſmile of dæmoniac exultation, and, with her glaring eyes fixed upon De

Montfort, to watch with diabolical ſatisfaction the operation of thoſe tortures which her frantic jealouſy was inflicting, ſhe audibly ſaid—

"Hippolyto del Roſario, I requeſt your preſence here, as comte de Montfort wiſhes for an introduction to the *huſband* of Victoria di Modena."

Victoria, almoſt ſubdued by aſtoniſhment at the motives for her aunt's conduct, which were now unfolding themſelves, ſat with her eyes riveted to the floor, perplexed and uncertain what part ſhe ought to take in ſo ſtrange a drama, until De Montfort exclaimed in a tone of much amazement—

"Conte di Urbino!!!"

Victoria in terror, leſt Urbino's arrival announced the approach of Polydore, the ſtory of whoſe death ſhe did not now believe, raiſed her eyes, and beheld in the elegant dreſs Hippolyto had worn, not the companion of conte Vicenza, but the identical ſtranger ſhe had encountered in the church during her captivity, the original of the miniature ſhe had found.

De Montfort's exclamation had alſo called

the ducheſſa's attention to the object which excited it; and in a tone of much ſurpriſe and great diſpleaſure ſhe ſaid—

"Urbino! What, what could have brought you hither?"

"I am too proud," he replied, "of the honour of being Victoria di Modena's *husband*, not inſtantly to obey the ſummons that called upon me to appear as the happieſt of mankind."

The different and contending ſenſations of Victoria's mind threw a momentary ſuſpenſion over her faculties, and her head ſunk upon the elbow of the couch on which ſhe ſat.

Her huſband flew to ſupport her.

"My life! my Victoria!" he ſaid. His voice recalled her fleeting ſenſes; ſhe opened her eyes and burſt into tears.

"Forgive," he exclaimed, "the deceptions I have been compelled to practiſe; and, oh! pardon me, my Victoria, for thus diſtreſſing you by ſurpriſe; but the moment required it. When publicly called upon to appear as the huſband of Victoria di Modena, I could not degrade her rank and ex-

cellence by producing him in the disguise of an obscure and unknown man. In my own character, I trust, the illustrious house of Modena cannot suffer degradation by owning an alliance with me. As conte di Urbino I now appear, to claim and avow my privilege of protecting from further cruelty and outrage that sacred and precious charge, heaven has blessed me by entrusting to my care."

"Rash and unthinking boy!" said the ducheſſa indignantly, "you are not the husband of Victoria. Under the name of Hippolyto you wedded her, therefore she cannot be the wife of Urbino, and is still indisputably under my protection."

"I was too conscious of the value of this hand," he replied, "not to make it mine irrevocably. In my own name, ducheſſa, I plighted her my vows; and your, but too natural, agitation prevented your observing it. But father Anselmo can satisfy your doubts, and prove my claims, which I will yield only with my life, except to the wishes of Victoria."

Father Anselmo was summoned by the

now dreadfully alarmed ducheſſa. "Holy father," ſaid ſhe, in the faltering accents of diſmay, "in what name did you plight the vows of this young man to Victoria?"

"In his own," the reverend monk replied, "and with the conſent of, and in the preſence of, the lady's guardian. The marriage is as binding as the church and law can make it."

"Then know, infatuated boy, you have doomed me to an ignominious death, and yourſelf to endleſs miſery," exclaimed Elvira as ſhe frantically ruſhed out of the room.

"Conte di Urbino," ſaid the dreadfully agitated De Montfort, "you have uſed me ill. Knowing, as you did, the ſituation of my heart, wreſting, thus baſely, my every hope of happineſs from me requires atonement."

"Atonement!" replied Urbino (as we now muſt beg leave to call him whom our reader has ſo long known under the name of Hippolyto), "can only be exacted for crimes or injuries, and I have done nothing that I cannot juſtify. You knew the ſitua-

tion of my heart alſo; and ſo far our confidence was mutual. From yourſelf I learned that lady Victoria was under no engagement to you, nor had ſhe ever fed your paſſion with a ſingle ray of hope; and from me you learned, that ſhould circumſtances ever permit me to ſeek for happineſs, I would attempt to win the favour of lady Victoria di Modena. Surely then you have no right to impeach my honour, or to demand *atonement!* Chance, or I ought rather to ſay Providence, made me acquainted with the perils lady Victoria was to be doomed to, from the moſt atrocious plot ever formed by villany; and who ſhall dare to ſay I had no right to attempt her reſcue? Conceiving myſelf accountable to no man for my actions, I followed her into Spain, where Providence permitted my attempt to ſucceed: and her guardian, to cruſh your hopes at once, beſtowed this invaluable hand this morning upon me; and to prove that I well know what ſuch a character as lady Victoria's claims, the firſt uſe I ſhall make of that guardianſhip ſo lately conſigned to me is to convey my precious charge to an aſylum

more ſuited to her purity. Dare lady Victoria, once more confiding in my honour, intruſt herſelf to my protection?"

Victoria eſſayed ſeveral times to ſpeak before ſhe could articulate. In low and tremulous ſounds ſhe ſaid—"O conte di Urbino, why aſk me ſuch a queſtion?" Then, with a ſoft bluſh of timidity and gratitude animating her lovely countenance, ſhe aroſe from her ſeat, and gave her trembling hand to Urbino to lead her. He took it with reſpect and grateful joy, and turning to Anſelmo ſaid—"Holy father, you will, I hope, have the goodneſs to accompany us to St. Marguerite's."

The holy man acquieſced; and the enraptured Urbino led his lovely bride, attended by the reverend monk, to a coach that was in waiting, leaving comte de Montfort overwhelmed with grief and amazement too great for utterance.

When they reached the carriage, which was ſtationed in a ſecluded part of the wood to ſave Victoria from the prying gaze of the domeſtics, the good Anſelmo returned to the houſe in queſt of Roſolia, while Urbino,

following Victoria into the coach, ſunk on his knees before her.

"Forgive, I implore you, lady Victoria," he ſaid, "the deceptions I have been compelled to practiſe, and the myſtery and ſilence I am ſtill doomed to perſevere in. The undecided ſtate I am forced to leave you in is an additional pang to the torments I muſt endure until we meet again: but, thanks to Heaven! you will be exempt from the miſery, the horrors of incertitude, that during my abſence I ſhall ſuffer, unknowing whether the moſt pure, the moſt exalted happineſs, or the extreme of wretchedneſs, is to be my portion; ſince, too much reſpecting the delicacy of your peculiar ſituation, I dare not at preſent urge that ſuit on which the exiſtence of my every hope of happineſs depends.

"Having, I truſt, completed your emancipation from the power of your vile and faithleſs guardian, and ſecured you from the toils of the villanous and profligate, I muſt go where fate now calls me; but I go only to return with the bleſſing of a father's preſence, to encourage me in my pleadings

for your pity; and, ſanctioned by him, to implore the ratification of thoſe vows extorted from your humanity for an unknown man, who, when he dares announce himſelf, may, he truſts, claim, without degrading her, an alliance with Victoria."

"Riſe, conte di Urbino, I entreat you, riſe!" ſaid our agitated and embarraſſed heroine. "Why ſhould you kneel to me, whom you have known only to heap benefits upon? To you am I not indebted for ſafety, for eſcape from deſtruction in every horrid ſhape it could aſſume? And what offence am I to pardon? It was neceſſary, no doubt, that your form ſhould wear diſguiſe; but your mind partook not of it. *That* I beheld in its own ſemblance: and—"

Victoria ſuddenly ceaſed. A conſciouſneſs of all which that mind had awakened in her own aroſe to her imagination. The deepeſt bluſhes ſuffuſed her cheeks: ſhe eſſayed, but in vain, to finiſh a well-turned compliment ſhe could but the day before have, unembarraſſed, paid Hippolyto. Now

the faſcinating ſtranger and Hippolyto were found to be the ſame. One had won her tendereſt eſteem, the other had charmed her fancy; and between the two characters ſhe found her heart was irrevocably gone. Her conſcioufneſs alarmed her delicacy; and her fears, leſt a too energetic delivery of her ſentiments ſhould betray her, robbed her of that eaſe which beſt could have concealed her feelings—feelings that, now ſurcharged by a variety of ſenſations, could not be repreſſed; and ſhe burſt into tears. The enraptured Urbino beheld her confuſion with tranſport, and, while he conſtrued it to his own advantage, appeared not to obſerve it: but riſing from his knees, and reſpectfully taking the ſeat beſide her, he ſaid—

"Since lady Victoria has the goodneſs to pardon my deceptions, perhaps ſhe will allow me to plead for a place in her friendſhip: even the peculiar delicacy of her preſent ſituation cannot prohibit my ſoliciting for that."

"Moſt certainly"—Victoria haſtily re-

plied, happy in an opportunity of anſwering to any thing to which ſhe could ſpeak without perturbation—" conte di Urbino has, as well he merits, my ſincere friendſhip."

" Then, as your friend," he ſaid, " may I not preſume to hope you will feel anxious for my ſafety, and that you will permit me ſometimes to addreſs you in the language of friendſhip, to tell you where I am, how I am, and as much of my proceedings as I am permitted to reveal?"

" Every privilege that friendſhip can claim," replied our heroine, " my preſerver ſhall find me anxious to allow him."

At this moment father Anſelmo returned with Roſolio, to whom he had imparted the metamorphoſis of Hippolyto. Almoſt frantic with joy, ſhe bounded into the coach, ſince Urbino was the very man ſhe had for ſome time ardently wiſhed to ſee—the huſband of her beloved lady. On her knees ſhe now threw herſelf; and taking a hand of each breathed forth the moſt animated prayers for their happineſs, intermingled with the moſt extravagant expreſſions of

joy which her affectionate and gla' heart could dictate; and as she arose from her knees to make room for the good monk to occupy the fourth place in the coach, she exultingly said—

"Now, now I shall die happy, since my fond wish is fulfilled. Conte di Urbino is the only man in the whole world who merits my inestimable lady; and lady Victoria is the only woman upon earth who has a right to such a husband."

"The only woman who has a right to him!" said Victoria mentally. "Oh, Matilda!"——Her heart ceased to throb with hope, the knell of blasted happiness struck heavily upon her soul; her senses sickened, and her aching head sunk for a resting-place against the coach side; for, oh! what a shade now appeared in the character of Urbino, darkening at once that which but for this would have seemed as clear and bright as the hand of nature could pourtray!

"But is it, can it be possible," thought she, "that Urbino is one of those cruel, cruel beings who steal insidiously into the un-

ſuſpicious maid's affections, and then forſake her, allured by the firſt fair face that ſtrikes his roving fancy?"—Bitter remembrance told our agoniſed heroine it was too true: the words of Matilda ſtill vibrated in her ears, and poured dire conviction, and its concomitant miſeries, into her throbbing heart. Oh, how ſhe wiſhed that ſhe could transform her huſband back into the humble Hippolyto, in whom had appeared no ſhade but in complexion!—"Yet," continued the ſuggeſtions of her upright mind, "the vows I have juſt plighted to him are not irrevocable; he told me ſo himſelf, and I will annul the marriage; for Urbino, my preſerver, my brave deliverer, ſhall not deſerve the name of villain. No; the grateful Victoria will preſerve his fame; the wrongs of Matilda ſhall not tarniſh it. He cannot know that he is in poſſeſſion of my affections, nor ſhall he be withheld from the lovely injured Matilda by any claim a knowledge of my ſentiments might lead him to imagine I had upon his heart—for this day we part, never more to meet. Yes, Urbino,

to your fame I will make this ſacrifice—never will I again ſee you. Reflexion in ſuch a mind as his will ſoon deſtroy deluſion: he will think of his meditated injuries to Matilda with abhorrence, and his ingenuous heart will lead him back to her and rectitude—while to reſignation will I devote myſelf and ſorrows, and within ſome peaceful convent-walls paſs the remainder of my hapleſs days."

Whilſt theſe determinations agoniſed our grieved heroine's mind, Urbino, attentive only to her, too quickly divined her thoughts in reſpect to him were undergoing ſome unfavourable revolution; and penſive and miſerable he became: for, in total ignorance of her knowledge of Matilda, he could form no conjecture of what could thus ſuddenly have filled her ingenuous mind with unpropitious thoughts of him. But, anxious to clear all doubts, and to relieve his mind from the tortures of ſuſpenſe and apprehenſion, he haſtily, as the coach moved from the château of comte de Montfort, addreſſed himſelf to father Anſelmo—

" It was my intention, you know, holy father, not to leave St. Lewis until the arrival of ſignora Farinelli, whom lady Victoria expects ſhortly at St. Marguerite's: but I have now changed my plans, and will this very day ſet out for Rome—ſince, why ſhould the man whoſe heart knows no guile, and who ſickens at the ſemblance of diſguiſe, continue enveloped in myſtery, and wear the appearance of diſſimulation one moment longer than is abſolutely neceſſary? And ſo truly wretched ſhall I be, while doomed to this ſtate of uncertainty relative to the deareſt hopes of my life, that I ſhall not reſt until I can emerge from the clouds of myſtery, and appear, with a fame as free from reproach as her own, before lady Victoria, to plead for a ratification of thoſe ſacred vows the villany of her guardian extorted from her this morning."

Victoria ſighed heavily. " How ingenuous his language ſounds!" thought ſhe: " But does not conſcience thrill one pang through his heart for the injuries of Matilda?" —She attempted to ſteal a glance at him, to

obſerve the changes of countenance ſhe doubted not the ſilent monitor of man muſt inſpire. But Urbino, watchful of all her movements, caught the glance; and its expreſſion ſtruck painfully upon his heart. It implied doubt and inquiry; and, deeply hurt and afflicted, his cheeks fluſhed the crimſon of indignant conſcious worth, ſwelling in ſullen dignity at the injuſtice of ſuſpicion, while extreme miſery wrung his ſoul in the torturing idea that his Victoria—his adored, his idoliſed Victoria—could not eſteem, or ſhe would not ſuſpect him. All his fond hopes of happineſs now fled at once; tears of anguiſh ſtarted to his eyes; deep ſighs, almoſt groans, heaved heavily from his heart; and, the moſt mournful of Sorrow's ſons, his head ſunk in deſpondence upon his breaſt.

Victoria attentively obſerved all this, and attributed all to the workings of conſcience, upon a ſudden recollection of the lovely injured Matilda: and vain was now every effort of the good monk and Roſolia to inſpire this truly wretched pair with any gleam

of cheerfulness, or draw them for a moment from their ſad and afflicting meditations.

At length they reached the convent of St. Marguerite's, where the venerable abbeſs welcomed our trembling and agitated heroine with the unaffected, cordial kindneſs of ſincerity; and the miſerable and dreadfully perturbed Urbino conſigned his Victoria, in the moſt ſolemn and affecting manner, to the protection of the abbeſs and the church: all which father Anſelmo, in a truly awfully impreſſive manner, enforced.

Urbino, wretched beyond conception, could ſcarcely conceal his agoniſing emotions; and, anxious to be where he could give free indulgence to his ſurcharged feelings, haſtened the moment of his departure. In the moſt pitiable agitation he bade a hurried yet touching adieu to his adored Victoria, who, firmly reſolved that they ſhould meet no more, felt ſhook to the very ſoul; yet exerted herſelf to the utmoſt ſtretch of her fortitude to conceal the anguiſh of her heart, whilſt ſhe ſaid "Farewell!"—But the moment the door

closed that shut out, as she believed, Urbino from her sight for ever, she fell, deprived of sense and respiration, into Rosolia's arms.

CHAP. IX.

SEVERAL moments elapſed before Victoria's ſenſe and reſpiration returned; when throwing her arms around Roſolia's neck, ſhe gave ſome relief to her burſting heart by a flood of tears; and ſoon after, diſconſolate and full of ſorrow, ſhe retired to the apartments allotted for her, where the miſery of her mind operating upon her haraſſed frame, the next morning found her with every ſymptom of approaching illness. Father Pierre was ſummoned; but medicine could not reach the ſource of her diſeaſe, although it helped to ſtrengthen her frame in ſuſtaining it. Every tender attention was paid to her by the Benedictine ſiſters, and the almoſt diſtracted Roſolia's affection evinced itſelf more and more each paſſing moment; and our ſuffering heroine, ever grateful for the kindneſs ſhe received, exerted herſelf to the utmoſt to repel the virulence of that mental anguiſh

which threatened deſtruction to her health, and for the ſake of poor Roſolia to appear ſerene. Inceſſantly Victoria prayed for fortitude and reſignation: but Heaven, for the firſt time, diſregarded the pious ſupplications of our heroine; for, notwithſtanding every exertion, her heart ſtill writhed in anguish at the idea of giving up Urbino for ever: yet ſtill ſhe was reſolute, ſince rectitude told her it muſt be ſo; and, though torturing was the taſk that rigid guide aſſigned her, ſhe determined to perform it, even ſhould her heart break in the execution.

Father Pierre brought Victoria the information of Urbino with the good Anſelmo, and attended by Thomas, having ſet out, in a pitiable ſtate of agitation and melancholy, for Rome in two hours after his return from St. Marguerite's; that the ducheſſa and her two vile aſſociates, Bianca and Maratti, had abſconded from the château immediately after our perſecuted heroine had left it, but that no one knew whither they were gone; and that comte de Montfort, in a ſtate of the moſt imbecile deſpondence, was preparing to ſet out for England, where he purpoſed paſſing the remainder of his life.

Signora Farinelli was at her brother's houſe in Florence when Roſolia's letter arrived there; and as ſoon as the utmoſt expedition in travelling, and the moſt impatient anxiety to reach it, could convey her, ſhe was at St. Marguerite's. The abbeſs prepared her for the languid ſtate and mental illneſs ſhe would find her adored pupil in: but when Victoria's chamber-door was opened to admit her, and ſhe beheld the attenuated form and wan cheeks of the darling of her heart, ſo much did ſhe find her altered more than even apprehenſion had pourtrayed, that ſhe could not command her feelings. In all the agony of high-wrought grief ſhe claſped the ſhadow of her once blooming Victoria in her arms, and wept over her in all the trembling anguiſh of a fond and doting mother, who has just found a long-loſt child only to undergo the torturing pang of cloſing its eyes for ever.

The preſence of her Urſuline, her ſecond mother, was a ſource of genuine delight and comfort to Victoria; it ſeemed a renovating cordial to her languid ſpirits; but it could not heal the rankling wound that appeared to the

anxious obſerver to be mining faſt her excellent conſtitution. However, it proved a conſiderable relief to our drooping invalid to pour out every ſecret of her guileleſs heart into the boſom of her beloved friend, and to talk to her of Urbino and Matilda; for to Roſolia, well as ſhe loved her, ſhe had never mentioned the latter; ſince only to a being ſacred as ſhe held her Urſuline to be, would ſhe breathe a ſound that could depreciate the merit of Urbino.

Signora Farinelli was perplexed and diſtreſſed beyond conception; for not knowing the hiſtory of Matilda, or the motives which might have actuated the conduct of Urbino, ſhe could not vindicate, neither could ſhe condemn him. She would not therefore raiſe a hope in her darling's breaſt that might prove a deluſion; nor were there, ſhe thought, ſufficient grounds for conſigning her to deſpair. The conduct of Urbino to Victoria argued, ſhe was convinced, no prior attachment, but ſpoke in every trait of it, and in the moſt decided language, an ardent, pure, and unconquerable one for her; and ſo amiable did

he appear to Urſuline in every point of view, where the clouds of myſtery that hung over him would permit her to ſee him as the free agent of his own actions, that ſhe would ſcarcely give herſelf leave to doubt but that Victoria muſt, in her alarm and agitation, have miſconceived the import of Matilda's words.

" I have no doubt," ſaid Victoria in reply to her venerable friend, " I have no doubt of the ſincerity of Urbino's attachment to me. Can I doubt it, after the inconteſtable proofs he has given me of it? But is that a reaſon that I ſhould be the means of tarniſhing his fair fame, or inducing him to continue unjuſt and cruel? I have reaſon to believe he loved Matilda long ere he ſaw me, and was in poſſeſſion of her tendereſt affections; and ſhall I, ſhall your Victoria, whom you ever taught to contemn the inſidious and deceitful, ſhall ſhe ſmile upon the man, and vow to honour him, who entrapped an innocent and ingenuous female's heart, ſubtilely ſtole into her very ſoul, then forſook her, and left her a prey for life to miſery and anguiſh? No: the man who has my vows ſhall have my eſti-

mation alſo: in deſpite of all, Urbino has ſtill my truant heart, and can only loſe it when exiſtence is no more; but he has not now my eſteem. Oh! but for this dark, this dreadful ſhade, he would poſſeſs my veneration, my adoration, as a being far, far above the frailties of erring mortals: and ſo exalted was he in my eſteem, that nothing upon earth but the evidence of my own ſenſes could have poured the agoniſing conviction of his perfidy into my heart. But the words of poor Matilda were proofs ſtrong as Heaven could ſend: they fell in heavy and indelible characters upon my tablet of happineſs; they ſound like the knell of blaſted hope for ever in my ears; they rob my heart of peace, my frame of health, and in the grave only ſhall I loſe the recollection of their dreadful impreſſion."

From this period Farinelli was truly wretched about our heroine, fearing the inroads ſuch a profound grief might make upon a frame already ſadly faded by recent illneſs, fatigue, terror, and ſorrow. But Victoria's diſeaſe was entirely mental, and had yet communicated no ſerious ſhock to her

conſtitution—although her pale cheeks, heavy eyes, loſs of appetite and reſt, with her languid air and plaintive voice, all hung out the enſign of decline; and the good Urſuline felt almoſt as impatient as Victoria's ſelf for a letter from Urbino, and for the arrival of father Alberti, whom ſhe now hourly expected, and whom ſhe reſolved to diſpatch inſtantly to Rome, to learn from Urbino every particular relative to Matilda, to take from her darling's heart, at leaſt, the tortures of uncertainty. But day after day paſſed on without intelligence of Urbino, the good Alberti, or conte Arioſto; and ſignora Farinelli at length reſolved to ſend Diego, who was faſt recovering his mental and bodily health at the Carthuſian convent, to Rome, in queſt of Urbino and Anſelmo, for the ſafety of whom the moſt ſerious apprehenſions were beginning to be entertained.

On the evening prior to Diego's intended departure upon this anxious embaſſy, as Urſuline and Roſolia were with Victoria in her apartment, the former ſtriving to beguile her beloved child of her ſadneſs by reading an

intereſting publication to her, a lay ſiſter entered, to requeſt ſignora Farinelli would favour the ſuperior for a few moments with her company.

Urſuline inſtantly complied; but ſtaid away ſo long, that our now eaſily alarmed heroine diſpatched Roſolia to learn if any thing particular had occurred to detain her venerable friend. Roſolia returned not;—and Victoria, ever apprehenſive of hearing ſome dreadful intelligence of Urbino, could not long brook the miſery of anticipating fear; and with a bounding heart and trembling frame haſtily deſcended to the abbeſs's parlour, and, ſoftly opening the door, beheld her Urſuline extended on the ſopha, pale as death, with the moſt heartfelt woe and horror in the extreme forcibly depicted on her countenance; while by her ſide ſat the abbeſs and Roſolia, both ſobbing in convulſive anguiſh. But ere ſhe had power to inquire into the cauſe of ſuch alarming agitations, ſhe anticipated all, on beholding, through the grate, poor faithful Thomas ſtriding up and down the room, wringing his hands and ſmiting his breaſt,

whilſt ſorrow's large tears chaſed one another down his ſun-burnt cheeks.

Every pang calamity could give now ſtruck upon Victoria's bleeding heart; but from the wreck of her happineſs fortitude ſprung up, and, as if ſome ſupernatural influence inſtantly pervaded her frame and mind, ſhe ſtood firm and collected, prepared to meet the felleſt ſhock that information now could give her.

"Speak, Thomas!" ſhe exclaimed in a tone of intrepid fortitude. "Tell me inſtantly the dreadful intelligence that has brought you here. Urbino is dead; or, worſe, has fallen into the hands of his enemies? Speak, tell me, tell me at once that fate has ſnapped the thread of my exiſtence?"

On the firſt ſound of Victoria's voice Thomas haſtily ſtrode up to the grate, graſped the bars with all his might, and looking moſt piteouſly upon her, he, as well as the dreadful agitation of his mind would permit, at length articulated: "Ah, poor precious dear! what a broadſide of ſorrow am I come to ſink your ſhattered little bark with!—for, oh! my dear, my brave, my good, my noble captain has

fallen-in with the infernal renegadoes! The devil's marines ſurrounded him and the venerable Sebaſtian, and towed them, with the poor old monk Anſelmo, into the whirlpool of their vengeance!"

This was indeed a broadſide that tore away every ſhadow of hope, and but for the moſt animated exertions of fortitude muſt have driven her at once into the gulf of deſpair; and claſping now the bars of the grate to ſave her from falling, ſhe haſtily cried in a tone of miſery and firmneſs touchingly blended—

"Oh! tell me all! tell me quickly every dreadful particular! Is he alive? Oh! tell me he is, and that there ſtill exiſts a poſſibility that our exertions yet may ſave him!"

The benevolent and conſiderate abbeſs gently approached our heroine, and placed herſelf cloſe behind her, ready to afford her every neceſſary aſſiſtance; but forbore to interrupt her with aſſiduities, believing that to recall her ideas to other objects might enervate the magnanimity which Heaven itſelf ſeemed to have inſpired her with for ſome

great purpoſe; while with much difficulty Victoria collected from the unconnected account and ſtrange jumbled jargon of poor Thomas the ſubſequent particulars.

"Urbino, Anſelmo, and Thomas, had embarked at Nice, and landed at Piſa, on their way to Rome; and were waiting for a carriage to convey them on, when they ſaw Franciſco and Sebaſtian, in the moſt viſible agitation, ſtep out of a carriage in the inn-yard at Piſa. Urbino in much amazement flew to them, who in their turn, were equally aſtoniſhed at beholding him, and as much overjoyed as their evident dejection would permit them to be. Together they all three entered the parlour where Anſelmo was; and ſoon after Thomas ſaw Franciſco and Urbino go out, viſibly oppreſſed by ſome ſerious affliction, and bend their courſe to the quay, where they engaged a veſſel to ſail immediately; and, in a ſhort time after, they all, Urbino, Sebaſtian, Anſelmo, Franciſco, and Thomas, embarked with a fair wind for Cadaques.

"Whilſt on board, Thomas learned from what was ſaid, that they were going to reſcue,

if poſſible, ſome young woman, whom they called Matilda, from the power of Don Manuel, into whoſe hands ſhe had fallen during Franciſco's abſence from Spain; and by means of the Inquiſition, whom Anſelmo adviſed their laying the matter before, they hoped to effect their purpoſe, ſhould the ſchemes of Franciſco fail, who had ſome ſecret reaſons for thinking he could reſcue her without applying to ſuch violent meaſures. That conte Urbino ſeemed particularly miſerable during the voyage, perpetually accuſing himſelf as the primary cauſe of Matilda's misfortunes, until he would almoſt wind himſelf into a ſtate of diſtraction; when nothing ſeemed to give him comfort, or recall his agitated mind to comparative ſerenity, but the handkerchief Victoria had bound round Thomas's wound the night of Alonzo's daring enterpriſe, and which Urbino had, while in the dungeon with Thomas, taken from him, and ſince kept conſtantly in his boſom: and in thoſe moments of deſpair he would draw it forth, preſs it with fervor to his lips, and look upon it until he became ſo ſadly calm, that all who beheld him felt intereſted

in his grief, and lamented to ſee him a prey to ſuch deep ſorrow.

" At length they ſafely reached Cadaques, where Franciſco left them; and, according to his directions, all in the habit of monks, ſet out at midnight to join him in his cell, near Don Manuel's caſtle.

" The part of the foreſt that led to Franciſco's dwelling was known only to Urbino; and by ſome unfortunate miſtake, probably in a moment of his now almoſt perpetual fits of melancholy abſence, he took a wrong path, and involved himſelf and his companions ſo much in the mazes of the wood, that vain was his every effort to extricate them from it.

" Weary, chagrined, and diſtreſſed, the night found them; and it was agreed to by all, that could they find any ſhelter from the prowling wolves, which would ſoon begin to roam, they would ceaſe to wander further in ſearch of Franciſco's cave until light returned to guide them. At length they diſcovered a goatherd's cot, where they were hoſpitably received; and Thomas being the only one of the party inclined to ſleep, retired to a loft,

whither his hoſt conducted him, and where on a truſs of ſtraw, he ſoon loſt, in a profound ſlumber, all recollection of the world, its toils and woes; but from which he was dreadfully awakened by his hoſt, who entered the loft in terrible conſternation, and rouſed poor Thomas juſt time enough to hear the ſound of horſes' feet rapidly leſſening on the ear. His diſmayed hoſt inſtantly informed him, that as he and the three monks were ſitting diſcourſing before a blazing faggot on the hearth, the door of the hut ſuddenly burſt open, and a band of armed ruffians ruſhed in, and ſeizing the monks, notwithſtanding the deſperate valour of the young one (for numbers prevailed over courage), carried them off without his being able to afford them any aſſiſtance.

"Thomas's firſt impulſe was immediately to follow them, even into the jaws of deſtruction—Don Manuel's caſtle, where he doubted not they were taken; but his more prudent hoſt diſplaying to him the madneſs and folly of ſuch an attempt, ſoon convinced him he could more eſſentially ſerve them by retaining his liberty. He then thought of applying to

the Inquiſition; but, upon reflexion, believed it better to leave fiſhing in that troubled water to wiſer heads than his own: and conceiving no one could or ought to be ſo intereſted in the fate of Urbino as his wife, he thought it his duty inſtantly to repair to her; and therefore at dawn of day his kind hoſt put him into the road to Cadaques, from whence in a few hours he embarked for Nice, and from thence had come with the utmoſt expedition to St. Marguerite's: and with many bitter and ludicrous invectives againſt Matilda, as a ſyren who had enticed another woman's huſband from the port of conſtancy, to wreck him upon the ſhoals of deſtruction," poor Thomas concluded his afflicting narrative.

Victoria was dreadfully agitated during this recital; yet fortitude ſtill preſerved its empire unſubdued. That ſuch deep intereſt for the fate of Matilda had drawn Urbino into the vortex of deſtruction, in ſpite of the precepts of rectitude, added a pang to her bleeding heart, but did not diminiſh her ardent ſolicitude to ſave him. She felt with the moſt feminine ſenſibility, but bore with manly

firmneſs; and turning to the weeping abbeſs, in a ſoft tone of ſaddeſt ſympathy ſhe ſaid—

"Alas! my deareſt madam, you are a participator in my miſery. Your brother is loſt, unleſs Urbino is ſaved. Oh! haſten then to intereſt the monks of St. Lewis in our cauſe: they have power, and influenced by you, will have inclination ably to aſſiſt us."

"Moſt certainly," replied the truly afflicted abbeſs, "I will haſten to apply to the prior, who will exert his power, which is great indeed, to extricate us from this heart-rending calamity, and——"

"But inſtantly, madam, muſt you make your application," eagerly interrupted Victoria; "the ſmalleſt interval of delay may prove of the utmoſt importance. Even now and our beloved friends may be doomed to a noiſome dungeon, ſuffering every torture that inſatiate vengeance and diabolical cruelty can inflict. Delay, then, is barbarity, is criminal in us; and protected or not by the monks of St. Lewis, I will this very night, attended by Diego and poor faithful Thomas, ſet out for Spain."

" You, my child!" exclaimed Farinelli, ſtarting from the bench in dreadful alarm: " you! ſo weak, ſo ill! It cannot, ſhall not be."

" Nay, but, my dear, my ſecond mother," ſaid Victoria, and determinately ſhe ſpoke, " not even the pleadings of friendſhip, nor the influence of your unerring and ſuperior judgment, can alter now my reſolution. Urbino is my huſband; and while I am his wife I will perform my duty, which now tells me I ought to aim at ſaving him from deſtruction; and fixed as fate is my determination to attempt it. Under the protection of the holy Inquiſition we will enter the caſtle of Don Manuel; and guided by Thomas and Diego we ſhall be empowered to explore many ſecret places, and perchance, permitted by Heaven, to deliver from miſery and bondage the friends we ſeek. My health cannot, ſhall not, prove a barrier to the performance of my duty; and fully am I convinced, that life muſt fall a ſacrifice did I neglect to follow implicitly the dictates of my heart upon this calamitous occaſion. By hope I ſhall be ſuſtained through the arduous enterpriſe, and ſhall gain both

health and happineſs, ſhould Providence lead me to ſucceſs."

Urſuline ſaw, in the enthuſiaſm of Victoria, much cauſe of alarm for her delicate ſtate of health; yet alſo ſaw that contradiction might prove of the moſt fatal conſequences: and keenly grieved, ſhe tacitly acquieſced, reſolving to accompany her upon the hazardous expedition, ſhould father Pierre not be able to prevail upon her to abandon the raſh project.

The poor exhauſted Thomas was committed to the ſpecial care of the domeſtics. The nuns were ſummoned by the devout and ſorrowful abbeſs into the choir, to unite in prayers for the ſafety and deliverance of father Anſelmo and his companions from the hands of their enemies; while a meſſenger was diſpatched to St. Lewis, to entreat the immediate attendance of all thoſe whom the abbeſs and Victoria wiſhed to conſult.

CHAP. X.

As ſoon as it was poſſible, the prior of St. Lewis, with father Pierre, two other monks, and Diego, arrived at St. Marguerite's, when great was their diſmay and conſternation on hearing the dreadful and afflicting intelligence. A long and intereſting conſultation enſued, in which the advice of Diego was much attended to; and at length a plan was determined upon and purſued the following morning at dawn of day, when Victoria, ſignora Farinelli, Roſolia, fathers Pierre, Leonard, and St. Romaine, Diego, and Thomas, diſguiſed as a company of pilgrims, ſet out for Nice; where engaging a veſſel bound for Cadaques, they ſailed with an auſpicious wind, and diſembarked at that port after a providentially expeditious paſſage; and immediately upon their arrival there the monks gave intimation at the holy office of their important buſineſs in Spain.

It was well for the cauſe Victoria had ſo

deeply at heart that Anſelmo was high in the eſtimation of the prior of St. Lewis, who was the beloved friend and kinſman of the then reigning pontiff; and was alſo, from the piety and auſterity of his houſe, which he was the founder of, as well as from the immenſe wealth of his convent, one of the moſt powerful men of the church. His voice bore with it an authority almoſt unequalled, ſince all were aware that, if his wiſhes were not inſtantly complied with, they would be arbitrarily enforced by a mandate from the papal chair. His word was, therefore, seldom diſputed; and even the dreadful and tyrannical ſynod of the Inquiſition, even from Rome to Madrid and Liſbon, bowed ſubmiſſively to his decrees; and well acquainted with all the links and myſteries of that horrid chain of machinery, he took care to uſe every means in his power to make the credentials with which he entruſted his brothers, Pierre and St. Romaine, deciſive; and to thoſe, ignorant of the myſteries of this dreadful inſtitution, appeared almoſt incredible the celerity with which intelligence was conveyed to and from the higher and far diſtant powers, or the promptitude

with which ſecret meetings were convened to annihilate that horde of villains, who for years had ſucceſsfully eluded the vigilance of the eccleſiaſtic and civil power, or dexterouſly thrown gold duſt into the eyes of the Dominicans: and, by means apparently almoſt ſupernatural, a large force was collected and all arranged, unknown to every mortal but thoſe intereſted or engaged in the enterpriſe, in a very ſhort period after Pierre and his brothers had preſented their memorial to that terror-inſpiring ſynod.

It was determined that the three females ſhould remain at Cadaques, under the protection of the eccleſiaſtic power; while the monks of St. Lewis, with Diego and Thomas, ſhould attend the formidable forces of the Inquiſition to the caſtle of Don Manuel; and at the appointed hour, which was in the dead of night, this dreadful troop, alike the ſcourge of vice and the perſecution of innocence, ſet forward under the auſpices of Diego; who, before he would undertake to guide the party to the caſtle, had obtained a ſolemn, but ſecret, promiſe from father Pierre, to favour the eſcape of Don Manuel, ſhould he be found

at home. And, totally unknown to, or ſuſpected by any of her own adherents, except poor Thomas, Victoria contrived to accompany this formidable phalanx, habited as an official monk—a diſguiſe which ſhe and Thomas had with infinite riſk and difficulty bribed and perſuaded one of the familiars of the holy office to provide her with. Urſuline and Roſolia ſhe left buried in a profound ſleep; and with a perturbation of ſpirits painfully violent, and with a heart torn by ten thouſand hopes and dreadful fears, ſhe entered the foreſt in the awful proceſſion. The energy of her mind gave ſtrength to her frame; and, aſſiſted by the friendly arm of Thomas, inconceivable was the fatigue ſhe endured, making way through brambles and underwood, and climbing over large maſſes of rock which they met with continually in the foreſt; but the ſoothing hope of liberating Urbino ſuſtained her ſtill, and beguiled the way of half its toil.

At length Diego led them to a huge pile of rocks, up which they with much difficulty clambered; and, entering the hollow of a monſtrous tree upon the ſummit, they quickly

deſcended into an immenſe labyrinth of caverns, where without a guide they might have wandered unſucceſsfully, and at length have only found famine and deſtruction. But long initiated in the myſteries of this intricate place, Diego conducted them in ſafety; and leading them through an iron grating (of ſuch ingenious, yet terrible, mechaniſm, that a complete knowledge only of its formation could conduct you through it without the abſolute certainty of being cruſhed to atoms by its innumerable barbed wheels), they entered a long cavern, from which they paſſed into a defile that wound upwards through immenſe rocks; and when they reached the ſummit of this winding and ſteep acclivity, they found themſelves hanging over a tremendous precipice, in an apparently illimitable cavern, over the vale of which a torrent of water ruſhed impetuouſly along, forming into innumerable foaming cataracts in its courſe, every moment ſpouting up its phrenſied ſurges with frightful violence to a conſiderable height, or turning with dreadful velocity in angry whirlpools.

The firſt of the formidable troop who

reached this horrid precipice, ſhuddering at the ſcene before them, were about to retire, believing Diego had miſtaken the way, as no poſſible method of further progreſs appeared to them, except into the fangs of deſtruction. But their faithful guide, deſiring them not to doubt his being equal to the taſk he had undertaken, pulled an iron ring concealed among the rocks, and immediately a dreadful reverberated clang was heard, aſtounding to the ears, and making even inquiſitors tremble; and all were ruſhing back, in horrid diſmay, when the entreaties and aſſurances of Diego induced them to exert ſufficient courage to await the event of their alarmed expectations. At length ſlowly and awfully an iron draw-bridge deſcended from its concealment in the roof, and fixed itſelf ſtedfaſtly upon the rock where they ſtood; and they ſoon found the chains of this and the ponderous iron-work, rattling in the deſcent, had cauſed theſe horrid ſounds, by the magic of echo re-iterating them with loud and hollow din from rock to rock.

All now paſſing this bridge, and deſcend-

ing a ſhort but ſteep declivity on the oppoſite ſide, they ſoon found themſelves in the vaults of that caſtle ſo long the dread and ſcourge of Catalonia, and ſo juſtly deemed inacceſſible even to the Inquiſition. From the vaults eaſy was their progreſs; and after mounting a few ſtairs that wound round the weſtern tower, and paſſing through two or three ſmall apartments and long paſſages, all ſeparated from each other by ſecret ways Diego and Thomas only could have led them through, this tremendous body at laſt ſafely arrived in the great hall, in ſolemn proceſſion, ſteady, reſolved, and ſilent as the grave, in the moment that the clock in the dome above them ſtruck the fifth hour. It ſounded majeſtically ſlow; but loud, ſweet, and awfully impreſſive was its tone. It ſeemed to toll the knell of the innocent beings who had been murdered in that place—the ſignal for the extirpation of vice, and the triumph of juſtice and virtue. Something of religious awe ſtruck on the hearts of all; the whole troop on the ſame inſtant ceaſed to move; and all covered their faces in ſolemn reverence, influenced by the ſame

idea—a belief that the eye of the Omnipreſent was fixed upon them.

The monks of St. Lewis and our heroine had from the ſame impulſe meekly ſunk upon their knees: and after offering up their devout petitions for ſucceſs, they all aroſe about the ſame time; Victoria, ſtedfaſt in her belief of divine interpoſition; and father Pierre, firm in faith, to break the awful pauſe, and lead his forces on to action.

The torches which had lit them through the caverns were now all carefully extinguiſhed, and dark lanterns ſubſtituted, as correſponding more with ſecrecy and caution; and the whole troop were inſtantly and ſilently divided into three detachments. One was to remain ſtationary in the hall, to guard the paſſes around them; while the ſecond, guided by Thomas, proceeded to the chamber of Garcias; and the third, led on by Diego and father Pierre, haſtened to the apartments of Don Manuel. And during this interval it would be utterly impoſſible for the feeble pen of the preſent hiſtorian to pourtray the agitation of our

poor heroine; left without ſupport, ſave her own firmneſs and reliance upon Heaven, with a multitude of armed and terror-inſpiring men, in the hall of that caſtle where her ſufferings had been ſo dreadful, and where the dæmoniac appearance of thoſe who now ſurrounded her recalled every paſt horror to her remembrance. But thoſe were only corporeal apprehenſions, ſtriking with tremulous hand on the chords of perſonal courage, and faded into nothing when compared to her mental feelings. On the ſucceſs of thoſe who had in the terrible array of death and deſtruction juſt ſtolen off, like the midnight thief or ſecret aſſaſſin, to aſſail vice in her own habitation, depended the fate of Urbino: on their victory hung the thread of her exiſtence. Well was ſhe aware of the power and number of Don Manuel's myrmidons, even formidable to her as the hoſt of the Inquiſition; and though her firm reliance upon the goodneſs of Heaven inſpired the moſt flattering thrills of hope, the frailty of mortality ſtill induſtriouſly preſented to her ſickening fancy every fear that could agoniſe her tortured heart.

To pourtray the feelings of Diego's ſuſceptible heart from the moment he became the guide of the Inquiſition into the caſtle, but more immediately during the moments of his paſſage from the hall to the chamber of Don Manuel, would be a taſk of greater difficulty ſtill. The pious Carthuſians had preſented to him every argument that could be deduced from religion and morality, to reconcile him to the act of betraying Don Manuel, and convince him that vice had no claims on virtue; and that the latter muſt break all bonds with the former before it could become pure and perfect. Diego's reaſon readily ſubſcribed to their doctrines. He was convinced they were juſt. He received in due form abſolution for his breaking his oath of fealty to his maſter, and undertook all that was required of him. But ſtill his heart rebelled: it was torn by contending paſſions; it was at war with its own feelings: for the arguments of the monks had not ſubdued his affection for, and gratitude to Don Manuel, whoſe crimes he had ever deteſted, even while he participated in them. But that ſubtile man

had won his love before his judgment had ripened to maturity; and he then believed the fund of gratitude ought to be unceasing for rescuing him from misery and bondage: and gratitude had interwoven itself into the very stamina of Diego's heart before he was aware that the obligation Don Manuel had conferred upon him was merely changing the nature of his captivity, and saving his body from cruel treatment to plunge his soul into eternal misery. The predilections imbibed in early life are not easily eradicated; and the path of duty, when not entered with every feeling of inclination, is deprived of half its sweets. That not-to-be-extinguished partiality for Don Manuel now flashed its fiery rays of upbraiding upon the susceptible soul of Diego; and he would have refused to proceed, and have braved all the tortures of the offended Inquisition, had not the purer unalloyed flame of gratitude and attachment to the family of Arioſto led him on. But, as he approached Don Manuel's chamber, he felt the trepidation of his heart pervading his whole

frame: yes, the brave Diego trembled; for he was compelled by duty to betray a man whom he loved, to all the horrors of the Inquiſition. But ſtill he hoped to ſave him; for, with all his crimes, Diego fondly believed there was ſome genial ſoil for penitence about him yet: and with tremulous hand, and unſeen by all but Pierre, he touched a kind of ſilent alarum which communicated with Don Manuel's bed, and was intended to appriſe him of the immediate approach of danger, and give him time to eſcape by one of thoſe ſecret paſſages with which the caſtle abounded.

Diego now pointed to Don Manuel's door. The officials inſtantly burſt in. Diego followed with faltering ſteps, and with a countenance pale as the ſhade of death. But caſting his anxious fearing eyes around, and knowing by the appearance of the apartment that Don Manuel had not occupied it that night, and was conſequently abſent from the caſtle, the fugitive blood returned to his cheeks, the fire of animation flaſhed from his before haggard eyes—his

ſtep became firm—his mien erect; Diego beamed a ſweet ſmile of heartfelt ſatisfaction, and was himſelf again.

Don Manuel's chamber having undergone the moſt minute inſpection, Diego led the officials into every chamber uſually inhabited in that diſtrict of the caſtle, as well as into thoſe which were not: but not a being could be found; while many of the rooms bore the appearance of having been occupied that very night, and, by the ſcattered garments, gave evident reaſon to ſuppoſe they had been precipitately abandoned by the inhabitants; which introduced ſuſpicion of the faith of the Inquiſition into the mind of the pious though not bigoted Pierre. But prudence ſuffered not his thoughts to wander from the confines of his own breaſt; while Diego, in painful amazement, doubted not their having been betrayed; and that Don Manuel's forces were then encompaſſing the caſtle, poſſeſſed of every paſs; in which caſe the hoſt of the Inquiſition were doomed to inevitable deſtruction. His dreadful apprehenſions Diego heſitated not to communi-

cate to thoſe with him; who all ſubſcribing to the reaſonableneſs of his fears, inſtantly participated in them; and, in diſmay and conſternation, precipitately returned to the hall, to conſult with their aſſociates upon thoſe ſtrokes of generalſhip that could poſſibly be attempted to extricate them from the deſtruction that probably awaited them, juſt as Thomas and his troop returned, after a ſearch equally unſucceſsful as their own.

By this time Aurora had raiſed the thin veil of morn ſo high, that the golden beams of the great orb of day were beginning to emanate their glowing rays from beneath it; and, diſperſing the grey gloom of twilight, enabled Diego and a reconnoitring party to make obſervations from the battlements and ramparts, where not a ſentinel of Don Manuel's was now viſible: when Diego, finding every reaſon to believe his preſaging fears were groundleſs, returned to the hall with the glad tidings of ſafety; and it was then agreed to proceed immediately to the dungeons, to liberate the hapleſs captives.

Gonzalvo's apartments too were abandoned,

and in great diſorder; his trunks and cupboards all open, and ſtripped of every valuable: whilſt on the floor and tables lay clothes, books, and papers ſcattered; and among which the keys of the dungeons were found. Torches were again lit; and a large detachment attended Diego to ſtrike off the fetters of cruelty; to give light, life, liberty, and joy to the children of miſery and bondage.

CHAP. XI.

Every nerve and artery in Thomas's frame now throbbed with the remembrance that he was a Briton; and on the impetuous wings of national feeling he was flying to give, what he deemed the firſt of bleſſings, liberty, to his fellow creatures, when affection to Urbino arreſted his flight, and placed him by the ſide of Victoria to guard her from harm, whom he believed his lamented captain prized beyond exiſtence—for our heroine was among thoſe haſtening to the dungeons. But the poignancy of her feelings, now ſhe believed her fate approaching its criſis, ſo agitated her trembling frame, that vain would have been every effort to proceed had not the friendly arm of Thomas been ready to ſuſtain her. And now, when deſcended into the paſſage leading to theſe dreadful cells, where horror and cruelty had long kept vigil, it would be impoſ-

ſible to pourtray her ſenſations. Each cell that was opened, each plaintive voice that murmured out for mercy, racked her panting heart to direſt torture. Hope flattering her with the belief of finding Urbino in the newly-opened cell; that hope each moment ſadly diſappointed; the frantic joy or mournful apathy diſplayed by the emancipated captives, many of whom had for years been conſigned to miſery and deſpair—all ſtruck too powerfully upon her ſenſibility for long endurance; and quite ſubdued, ſhe entreated Thomas to lead her back to the hall, leſt her feelings ſhould betray her: and at the moment Thomas was about to obey her, a door was opened, which diſcovered a female captive kneeling on a truſs of ſtraw; when Victoria ruſhing forward, almoſt deprived of reaſon by joy and amazement, claſped to her agitated breaſt ſignora Octavia, who, dreadfully alarmed by the commotions in the dungeons, was ſupplicating Heaven for protection; when rouſed by aſtoniſhment from her invocation, and puſhing back the monkiſh cowl to ſee who claſped her ſo fervently to a palpitating

heart, discovered to the wondering beholders the beautiful head of our heroine.

Father Pierre and Diego were now in the utmost consternation. What a scene for the gentle spirits and delicate frame of lady Victoria to be engaged in! Severely they condemned her temerity, and trembled for its effects; and whilst pausing to consider what plan they ought to pursue, one of the inquisitors, whose face was entirely shaded by the cowl appropriate to the habit, glided by Diego, saying as he passed in a low and hollow voice—

"Convey lady Victoria to the apartments of Sebastian, where you will find Teresa."

Diego's powers of action were for a moment suspended by astonishment; while the inquisitor, mingling with the crowd, soon was lost to Diego's scrutinising eye. Conjecture at length giving way to certainty, Diego hastened to do as he was directed; and taking Victoria in his arms, requested father Pierre to conduct signora Bernini; and desiring Thomas to stay with the officials to guide them to the secret cells, and to bring immediate intelligence to them in

Sebaſtian's apartments, if any of thoſe whom they ſo anxiouſly ſought for were found, he proceeded to the hall.

A flood of tears coming to Victoria's relief, ſhe was ſoon ſufficiently recovered to walk with the ſupport of Diego's arm; and drawing the cowl over her face to ſave her from the further gaze of the men, they paſſed into the hall: where Diego, fearing ſome treachery might lurk beneath the myſterious inquiſitor's habit, ordered a detachment of the troops to attend him in exploring the apartments of Sebaſtian before he would ſuffer Victoria to enter them: and, upon examination, finding all ſafe, he led our heroine, Octavia, and father Pierre into a ſpacious room, which had been the ſtudy and eating-parlour of Sebaſtian. Adjoining it were two good chambers, which had been occupied by himſelf and his beloved Theodore. Here they found the poor agitated Tereſa in pitiable diſmay; although the ſight of Diego, and the ſuccinct account he had given her of her captivity being ended, had reſtored in ſome degree the powers of her mind, which were before almoſt loſt

in wild affright. And here the prudent Diego thought Victoria and Octavia might remain ſecluded from thoſe heterogeneous beings now in ſuch numbers in the caſtle; and as of the conduct of the captives in particular they could poſſibly form no judgment, they being of all nations and of all deſcriptions of people, and were to remain in the caſtle until the Inquiſition thought proper to diſmiſs them, he wiſhed Victoria to continue in a detached apartment, ſecured from interruption or annoyance in any ſhape, as long as ſhe ſhould chooſe to remain in the caſtle, where he fervently wiſhed her raſhneſs had not led her.

he poor appalled Tereſa allowed Victoria to enter the room unheeded by her, as her face was covered; but the moment ſhe beheld Octavia ſhe wildly ſhrieked, and, tottering towards the good monk and Victoria, earneſtly implored them to exorciſe the ſpirit of the poor murdered donna. With difficulty was ſhe convinced of Bernini's being ſubſtance; and her joy and aſtoniſhment could only be equalled by her former terror, when Victoria, raiſing her cowl, diſcovered her-

ſelf to the affectionate old woman, and entreated to know if ſhe could give them any account of Sebaſtian or his companions?

"I have not ſeen ſignior Sebaſtian, or any one belonging to him, ſince laſt I beheld you, dear donna," replied the ſtill trembling Tereſa. "I was impriſoned by that fiend Garcias to torment you, ſweet lady; and not till after your eſcape was I liberated. One captive only has been brought hither ſince your eſcape; but that was a lady, poor thing! young, and almoſt as beautiful as you are."

"Matilda!" exclaimed Victoria in pitiable agitation: "Matilda! was it not? Oh! ſpeak, deareſt Tereſa, and tell us where to find her!"

"Alas! I know not: for Don Manuel in a fit of rage at her wayward humour (for ſhe was not like you in temper) dragged her from the library three days ago, and I never beheld her, never heard of her ſince."

Victoria in ſilent ſorrow dropped the faſt-flowing tears of pity, grief, and diſappointment upon the boſom of the ſympathiſing Octavia; whilſt Diego eagerly demanded,

if Don Manuel had disappeared at the same time?

"Oh, no:" she replied. "He supped here but last night; and about twelve we were all dismayed and astounded by that subterraneous thunder, ever of horrid omen. But last night it sounded, I thought, more dreadful than I had ever heard it; and, almost frantic with fear, I rushed after Juan into the great hall at the moment a tall spectre, clad in black flowing robes, enveloped in blue flames, glided into the parlour to my master. I beheld no more: for overcome by terror I fell into a swoon, and on my recovery from it found myself in this room, from whence I have not dared to move."

Further inquiries were now prevented by the sound of loud huzzas re-echoing through the dome of the hall. The tide of new-raised hope rushing through Victoria's heart was almost too powerful for her to bear; and she sickened with joyful expectation as the noise, approaching, issued from the library, when she perfectly recognised the voice of Thomas shouting above the rest, in all the ecstasy of enthusiastic joy. Assured

now, beyond all doubt, that Urbino was found, and that in one moment more ſhe ſhould behold him, a thrill of modeſt ſhame trembled through her agitated boſom, bluſhing for the unequivocal proofs of affection her conduct had evinced for a man ſhe believed now for ever devoted to another. She drew her cowl over her face to hide her burning bluſhes; ſhe wiſhed herſelf at St. Marguerite's, or even with Urſuline and Roſolia, until an idea ſuggeſted itſelf which ſhe eagerly cheriſhed. "May not all I have done be attributed to gratitude? Oh! it ſurely may; for Urbino did more for me." Then ſtarting from Octavia's arms, and throwing back the cowl, ſhe darted forward to welcome Urbino to liberty and life, as Thomas entered the room bellowing with joyful triumph, and dancing in the moſt groteſque manner ſome ſteps of a hornpipe he had learned in England when a boy, to the great riſk and alarm of the venerable Anſelmo, whom he bore on his ſhoulders, which he now heaved up and down like the undulating billows of his own element.

"Hoiſt every flag, for joy has boarded us," cried he vociferouſly. "Part of our precious convoy retaken.—Found the poor ſhattered hulk in the gulf of limbo! D—n my eyes if ever I was ſo afloat with glee! So I heaved the old veſſel up, and bore away as faſt as the wind and tide of joy could drift me, to caſt all the cares on board the lady Victoria to the devil who made them. So now let the dear, kind, little fluttering heart of her ſtand off for the harbour of peace and reſt; for the remainder of our glorious fleet cannot be much abaft. So, do you ſee, I'll be getting under weigh to cruiſe for them, now I know their courſe." And away Thomas ſtrode, ſinging, or rather roaring, an old Engliſh ſea ballad, leaving Victoria aſhamed of her inhumanity. She could not rejoice as ſhe felt ſhe ought to rejoice on beholding the good Anſelmo, who had been kind to her in the hour of diſtreſs, reſcued from miſery and bondage. But the deareſt hope of her life his appearance had diſappointed; and ſhe felt almoſt angry, almoſt envious of the favour of Heaven thus partially ſhown to him; for a moment con-

ceiving that his good fortune was injuring Urbino. But theſe ideas were only momentary: ſhe bluſhed for human nature, and, ſhuddering at her own preſumption, invoked the forgiveneſs of unerring Heaven; and burſting into tears of penitence, preſſed the old man's cold and trembling hand to her lips, and with all the cordiality of genuine ſatisfaction welcomed his reſtoration to liberty and happineſs.

The immediate realiſing of Victoria's new-raiſed hope was diſappointed by the appearance of Anſelmo; but yet the flattering ſoother ſtill whiſpered to her throbbing heart firm faith in the predictions of Thomas. But too ſoon this hope was taught to glow with leſs confidence, ſince the pious Anſelmo could give no intelligence of his hapleſs companions. They had been together dragged from the goatherd's cot; but when they entered the ſubterraneous paſſages of the caſtle he was ſeparated from conte Urbino and Sebaſtian, and conveyed to that noiſome dungeon, from whence the Inquiſition had, through the mercy of Heaven, liberated him; nor during his

miſerable captivity had he been able to obtain any tidings of theſe his lamented friends.

The wreath of hope that had twined itſelf round Victoria's heart, and had each hour been putting forth new bloſſoms ſince ſhe entered Catalonia, now was blighted, bud by bud, as new moments paſſed away; and at length withered in the ungenial ſoil of diſappointment and deſpair, when, towards the cloſe of day, every known ſpot of the caſtle, its grounds, ramparts, and the ſhipping belonging to it, had undergone the moſt minute ſcrutiny, and, although many wretched victims were found in the moſt ſecret priſons, neither Urbino, Sebaſtian, nor Matilda could be traced. Victoria had herſelf, to the amazement of Thomas and Diego, led the officials into the church, every part of which was examined with as much eagerneſs and care as if the lives of all depended upon finding thoſe they ſought; ſo much had the youth, beauty, and ſweetneſs of manners, with the courage and affection our heroine had evinced in the purſuit of her huſband, intereſted

every beholder. But no one could they find, or any communication between the church and any other place could they diſcover, except thoſe Victoria was acquainted with. The great folding doors which ſhe had hoped to eſcape by were with much labour and difficulty forced open; but through them they could not penetrate into the foreſt, time having raiſed barriers of trees and brambles, which, after the moſt determined exertions, were found impaſſable.

This inveſtigation of the church deeply probed by tender remembrance every bleeding wound in the boſom of Victoria to direſt torture, and ſhe returned to Sebaſtian's ſtudy the wan and woeful child of anguiſh. But though ſhe found it was the univerſal opinion that thoſe they ſought were maſſacred, or removed from the caſtle, a ſtrong and invincible perſuaſion aroſe in her mind that they were ſtill concealed in ſome undiſcovered priſon, periſhing for want of ſuſtenance. And the more her friends wiſhed to argue her out of this belief, the more bigoted ſhe became to it; and vain was every

effort to diſpel a thought that ſtood firm as her reliance upon Heaven; and fruitleſs alſo was every attempt to induce her to quit the caſtle, and rejoin ſignora Urſuline at Cadaques.

The inquiſitors having much buſineſs to tranſact relative to the captives and property found there before they could depart, our heroine determined to remain as long as they did, and continue her agoniſing ſearch; and father Anſelmo, having in ſome degree imbibed her opinions and preſentiment, prevailed upon the officials and her friends to offer no oppoſition but advice to her deſire of ſtaying. But as father Pierre and Octavia much wiſhed her to quit a ſcene ſo torturing to her ſenſibility, and deſtructive to her peace, they failed not to avail themſelves of the privilege of adviſing; and while they were ſtrongly urging her departure, the ſame inquiſitor who had ſo ſurpriſed Diego glided by her, ſoftly ſaying, unheard by all but her——

"Quit not the caſtle until the fate of your huſband is aſcertained."

The arguments Victoria had before liſtened to without conviction now no longer arreſted her attention; they talked unheard by her; for the inquiſitor's words had given freſh tortures to her ſoul, ſince ſhe doubted not but this myſterious man had ſome potent reaſon for his ſolemn mandate to her. And now every horror that cruelty could encompaſs Urbino with, aroſe in dreadful array to her terrified imagination. But, while her heart ſickened with a load of anticipated ills, it, like Pandora's box, ſtill contained hope lurking at the bottom; and eagerly ſhe ſought for and obtained an opportunity of ſpeaking to this man of myſtery unobſerved.

"Tell me, I conjure you, tell me," ſhe ſaid, "have you reaſon to ſuppoſe Urbino is really in the caſtle?"

Cautiouſly he looked around before he anſwered, "I have."

"Oh! where? where?" ſhe cried. "If the ſweet beams of humanity e'er warmed your breaſt, delay not to tell me where."

"I have reaſon to believe that he is in

ſome ſecret priſon of this infernal caſtle; but where, alas! I know not; yet am as anxious as yourſelf to find him."

Victoria's head sunk, overwhelmed by diſappointment, on her boſom, which heaved convulſively with the pangs of ſorrow. The inquiſitor pauſed: at length he ſpoke—

"Have you ſufficient love for Urbino, your gallant preſerver, your ſuffering huſband, to venture with me alone, and in the dead of night, unknown to any other mortal, to explore ſecret and dangerous places in ſearch of him?"

"I have," ſaid Victoria firmly, although ſhook to the very vitals of ſenſibility.

"Then in the dead of night expect me:—but remember, if you reveal a ſyllable of what has paſt between us, or impart to any one our meditated nocturnal ſearch, your life and Urbino's ſhall be the forfeit of your imprudence." Then vaniſhing among the officials, Victoria beheld him no more that evening.

Supper was ſerved for Victoria and her immediate friends in the ſtudy of Sebaſtian;

and influenced by the hopes her meditated nocturnal ſearch inſpired, ſhe forced herſelf to take nouriſhment, with a view to ſuſtain her through any toil ſhe might have to encounter: and ſtill aſſuring her friends ſhe would not, for ſome days at leaſt, depart from the caſtle, it was determined that Diego, with an eſcort, ſhould the following morning proceed to Cadaques, to relieve the anxiety of ſignora Urſuline and Roſolia relative to Victoria, and conduct them to her if they would venture to the caſtle.

It was while ſitting after ſupper this evening that Victoria, wiſhing to preſerve the firmneſs of her mind by diverting it from ſome doubts relative to the inquiſitor, which, in deſpite of every effort to ſubdue were faſt ariſing, requeſted Octavia to relate all that had occurred to her after her myſterious diſappearance; and how ſhe had been reſtored to life after wearing ſo dreadfully the ſemblance of death.

Octavia Bernini was a woman of ſtrong underſtanding, and was gifted with a fluency of language ſeldom equalled; but if

her converſation had a fault, it was that of deſcribing too minutely every event, and decking in all the flowers of rhetoric even the moſt trivial circumſtances. Her narrative, conſequently, was long and tedious, though eloquently delivered: therefore, for the ſake of brevity, we will preſent it to our readers in our own ſimple unadorned language, as we have ſtill to relate matters which we truſt they will find more intereſting; and alſo from the omniſcious power which authorſhip poſſeſſes, we can relate both cauſes and effects, whilſt the inferior knowledge of Octavia only allowed her to ſpeak of the latter.

" Overpowered by a ſtrong ſoporific, which had been mingled by Juan in her food, and of which both Victoria and Hero had partaken, Octavia did not awake until late in the morning, after her bed had been conveyed, by means of a ſinking floor ingeniouſly contrived for ſuch a purpoſe, from the apartment where Victoria ſlept into a ſmall lumber-room beneath it. Her conſternation and diſmay were great, as may well be

imagined, when she perceived what had been effected during her heavy sleep.

" Fears for her own immediate safety were soon dispelled on perceiving her baggage had been removed along with her; but the circumstance of her removal, and the mystery attending it, she instantly conceived portentous of impending evil to Victoria.

" In this melancholy prison, without employment and without society, she passed day after day, attended by a savage fear-inspiring ruffian, who in impenetrable silence regularly supplied her with food. At length, one day Garcias entered her prison, with a cup containing a liquid, which, notwithstanding her piteous entreaties and vehement struggles, he, aided by her jailor, forced her to drink. Believing that she had swallowed a deadly poison, she recommended her soul to Heaven, and threw herself upon her bed, where almost immediately she felt insensibility stealing over her faculties.

" The diabolical practices of Garcias had led him to an acquaintance with a drug which gave to the human frame the ap-

pearance of death for ſome hours after it was taken; and to weak conſtitutions he had often found it prove fatal: but to him that was no impediment to the uſe of it whenever he required its aſſiſtance.

" In as ſhort a time as he expected, the reſpiration of Octavia became imperceptible; her joints ſtiffened, her complexion aſſumed a cadaverous hue, and the chill of death ſat on the ſurface of her body: and in this ſtate, clad in a ſhroud, disfigured with gore, ſhe was conveyed to the bed where our affrighted heroine diſcovered her. In her ſtruggles againſt ſwallowing the naufeous potion, ſome of it was loſt: its power did not continue ſo long, therefore, as Garcias expected, and its dreadful influence began to recede from her heart at the moment her deadly groans appalled Victoria.

" Severe were the ſufferings of Octavia whilſt the power of the noxious drug was evaporating; but her moans diſturbing conte Vicenza, who lay ill of his wound in the other bed, ſhe was conveyed back to her priſon; and many days elapſed before ſhe could leave her bed, and many more before

ſhe was perfectly recovered from the effect of the ſomniferous draught. At length, when her feelings were quite reſtored to their natural energy, ſhe was removed by the hand of wanton cruelty to that noiſome dungeon from whence the power of the Inquiſition had ſet her free."

CHAP. XII.

The prolixity of Octavia's narrative retarded its termination to a late hour; and as her auditors had undergone much bodily and mental fatigue during the laſt twenty-four hours, they, ſoon after ſhe concluded, retired to their different apartments;—our heroine and Octavia occupying the chamber of Sebaſtian; Tereſa and a female captive that of Theodore; while Diego and Thomas made beds for themſelves in the library, cloſe to the door of Sebaſtian's ſtudy, that they might protect through the night her whom they both conſidered themſelves bound to guard from every danger, even at the hazard of their lives.

Signora Octavia's diſpoſition was of that firm caſt, that would not ſuffer itſelf to be agitated by exceſs of ſenſibility: her paſſions were, unleſs violently attacked by grief, ever in ſtrict diſcipline, and in obe-

dience to the regularity of her mental arrangements: ſhe felt not with acuteneſs, deſtructive to repoſe, the ſudden tranſition from deſpair to happineſs. Her mind now calm in the ſweet ſunſhine of reſtored tranquillity, ſhe, after a pious thankſgiving to Heaven for its late mercy vouchſafed to her, ſunk into a profound ſleep, full of pure but ſerene joy, in the ſoothing hope of ſoon beholding her beloved huſband and children; while our agitated heroine, a prey to agoniſing uncertainty and apprehenſion for the fate of him dearer to her than her own exiſtence, ſought not her pillow, where ſhe knew ſleep, however wooed, would not "weigh her eyelids down," or "ſteep her ſenſes in forgetfulneſs." But in all her ſorrows and perplexities, her thoughts flew up to heaven for counſel and protection. Now, therefore, unſeen by mortal eye, ſhe ſupplicated for the aid of her Creator in her preſent anxious undertaking, and fervently implored his divine protection for Urbino and Sebaſtian. Time flew unheeded in this her ſerious employment, until the caſtle clock tolling the hour of one rouſed

her from her knees, with the recollection of her promiſe to the myſterious inquiſitor.

It was now the dead of night, but he had appointed no place or hour for meeting. Urbino might fall a victim to this unpardonable neglect. Victoria's ſoul ſickened with torturing apprehenſion, and ſhe inſtantly reſolved to explore the library, where ſhe knew not Diego and Thomas were keeping vigil with a hope of meeting the inquiſitor.

"And ſhould you meet him, will you dare to venture alone with him, all myſtery as he is?" whiſpered trembling fear.

"Whilſt the ſhadow of a hope exiſts of my finding Urbino, I would dare to venture in queſt of him, even with villany confeſſed," anſwered her throbbing heart, glowing with animated gratitude and affection: but her frame ſhivered with the nervous chill of apprehenſion and fatigue; which, with the extreme cold of the night, induced her to wrap herſelf up cloſely in the ſacerdotal habit ſhe wore: and, taking a light, ſhe ſoftly opened her door into Sebaſtian's ſtudy, and beheld the inquiſitor ſeated at a

table there, with a lanthorn lying by him. On ſeeing Victoria, he aroſe and approached her.

" I almoſt deſpaired of your coming," ſaid he in a cautious whiſper.

" You appointed no hour or place for meeting," Victoria falteringly replied; diſmayed at the time, the place, the myſtery of this meeting; with the inquiſitor wearing his hood, overſhadowing his face ſo much as to preclude all poſſibility of catching the ſmalleſt glimpſe of his countenance.

" Your coming at all," ſaid the incognito, " diſcovers that intrepidity in you which I hoped to find. But dare you, lady Victoria, at this hour, and unknown to you as I am, dare you venture alone with me, upon an enterpriſe that muſt expoſe you to many horrors, and poſſibly dangers? although I am, as you ſee, well armed to defend us both (here, throwing open his robe, he ſhowed piſtols fixed in his belt). This ſcheme is my laſt hope for the diſcovery and preſervation of Urbino; and without your aid I cannot effect it. My hope is

juſtly founded; yet it may fail: when, alas, alas! the moſt amiable, the moſt glorious youth that ever ornamented the world will too ſurely fall a victim to diabolical relentleſs vengeance."

Every fibre of Victoria's ſoul was tortured now by direſt anguiſh at this dreadful alternative The ſtranger s voice diſcovered ſuch tones of tenderneſs and ſympathy in his laſt ſentence, that, accepting the ſounds as bonds of faith, ſuſpicion vaniſhed; while the horrors that hung round Urbino inſpired her with augmenting courage, which urged her on to attempt his reſcue at the hazard of every evil that might befal herſelf, and firmly ſhe ſaid—

"I dare venture with you. Affection and gratitude will lead me, undauntedly, through every horror and every danger that can aſſail me; ſince the ſhadow of a hope exiſts, that through thoſe perils and terrors we may be led to reſcue Urbino from deſtruction."

"Will gratitude and affection," the inquiſitor aſked, "teach you ſubmiſſion to my now placing a bandage over your eyes;

ſince by the moſt ſolemn oaths am I bound never to diſcover ſome ſecret paſſages through which we muſt paſs before we can reach our place of deſtination? But ſhort will be this deprivation of ſight, as theſe ſecret places are near at hand."

"Urbino has done more for me," ſaid Victoria in the energetic tone of enthuſiaſtic gratitude, throwing back her cowl for the accommodation of the bandage, which the inquiſitor haſtily placed over her eyes: then taking her hand, ſhe felt his cold as death, and horribly convulſed by dreadful agitation. Inſtantly ſhe caught alarm: but it was too late to recede; and rallying her courage, ſhe ſuffered him to lead her on. For ſeveral paces he conducted her over level ground, ſtopping only twice, as if to open doors or places of entrance. At length, making a full pauſe, he ſtamped with his feet, and inſtantly the place on which they ſtood ſunk rapidly about two fathoms. He then lifted her off the platform on which they had deſcended; and which, by the noiſe that immediately enſued, Victoria concluded aroſe to its original ſtation.

Her heart now palpitated high with alarm of treachery; and the incognito taking the bandage from her eyes, ſhe found herſelf at the entrance of a low winding arcade formed by nature through a long chain of rocks. And now ſhe ſaw her myſterious guide approach a cavity in the rock, where ſhe was ſurpriſed to behold a number of torches depoſited; two of which he took; and lighting them by his lantern (which he then faſtened to his belt) he g ve one to Victoria to bear; and, carrying the other himſelf, proceeded through the arcade; the winding path of which was in many places extremely ſlippery, owing to the tide reaching it at high water.

At length they paſſed through the arcade; and our agitated heroine found herſelf in an immenſe black cavern; along the rugged bed of which an inlet of the ſea foamed impetuouſly, ſounding with horrid din as it rapidly daſhed itſelf from rock to rock. The torches emitted their glaring beams not half way through this enormous place; but, caſting their light in liquid brightneſs upon the black torrent beneath,

officiouſly reminded Victoria of her dreadful entrance into Don Manuel's caſtle.

Appalled by her ſituation, and all the paſt horrors buſy memory huddled together in terrible array, as hideous ſprites to blaſt her courage, her trembling limbs refuſed to bear her further—ſhe ſtopped—ſhe panted for breath—a cold dew overſpread her forehead—a murmur of ſupplication for mercy from the inquiſitor was faltering on her lips, when the fate of Urbino arreſted every ſelfiſh thought, repleniſhed the dying lamp of courage in her heart, thrilled energy through her veins, gave confidence to her ſoul, and to her feet a firm undaunted ſtep.

In a moment more, the inquiſitor, exhorting her to ſummon every particle of reſolution ſhe could command to aid her through their anxious enterpriſe, led the way up a ſteep acclivity, that wound along the ſide of the cavern in a variety of directions. At length they reached the ſummit; where nature, in ſome capricious moment, had thrown out huge maſſes of rock, forming a bridge acroſs the cavern nearly two hundred feet above the ſurface of the water;

and of ſuch extraordinary formation, it ſeemed to have no baſe; but appeared as if large fragments of rock hung in one large conſolidated body, ſuſpended in the air by the power of gravitation.

It required every effort of our heroine's renovated courage to impel her following her guide upon this apparently baſeleſs fabric; from whence, as ſhe looked upon the gulf beneath, her head became giddy, and her ſenſes ſickened with direſt apprehenſion.

They however ſafely reached the termination of the bridge, and cautiouſly ſtepping acroſs the chaſm which ſeparated it from the path they were to take, began a winding deſcent on the other ſide of the cavern; when ſoon, in ſuddenly turning a very pointed projection of rock, a horrid ſound ſtruck upon Victoria's ears, partaking of a hideous yell and ſoul-harrowing moan. Her heart was appalled, and her knees trembled; yet ſhe forbore to expreſs her ſurpriſe or fears, ſtill hoping her conductor would relieve both. But he was ſilent. As

they proceeded, the dreadful ſounds of the howling of a wild beaſt and the groans of a human being, direfully mingled, increaſed moſt rapidly; and with theſe appalling ſounds the noiſe of rattling chains aſſailed her ears: this was the ſevereſt blow her heart had yet received; ſhe gaſped for breath, her frame was convulſed, and, frantically graſping the inquiſitor's arm, in the ſharp tone of reaſon chaſing deſpair ſhe exclaimed:

"Oh, felleſt agent of cruelty! is it to ſeek Urbino's mangled corſe you bring me thus to the den of his ferocious devourers?"

"Lady Victoria," ſaid the inquiſitor mildly but impreſſively, "believe me not ſuch a monſter."

This ſhort ſentence at once diſſipated her alarm, and ſtilled her dreadful agitation; for from his voice ſhe diſtilled the balm of ſecurity and comfort, for its tones were thoſe of pity: and eagerly ſhe now entreated pardon for her frantic conduct and injurious ſuſpicions.

"The random arrows of terror and for-

row can never be felt as ſhafts of offence: I therefore have nothing to pardon," ſaid he coldly, walking on.

Deſcending now but ſlowly, owing to the extreme ruggedneſs of the path, it was ſome time before Victoria could diſcern any thing to account for theſe diſmaying ſounds, that ſtill made her tremble. At length ſhe diſtinctly beheld at the ſame ſide of the cavern, but at ſome diſtance below them, a creature of a moſt ſingular appearance moving with aſtoniſhing rapidity up and down a rugged ſpace of about a dozen feet; ſending forth in its movements fierce yells and groans of anguiſh, as if enraged and in deſpair at its unſucceſsful efforts to break the ponderous chain which bound it to the rock. At length the winding path brought Victoria and her guide as near this furiouſly agitated creature as ſafety would permit any one to approach, when every feeling of humanity was tortured by dreadful amazed commiſeration at the horrid ſpectacle ſhe ſaw.

The inquiſitor ſtopped, and for a moment looked in horrid ſilence upon the dreadful

object; and then loudly, though in a tone of pity, exclaimed—

"Sanguinario! Poor Sanguinario!"

The wretched creature inſtantly ceaſed its rapid motion; and Victoria, ſhuddering, beheld a human being before her, who was ſuffering under all the direful horrors of lycanthropy. He howled no more; but his moans, ſo woe-fraught, were inſupportable to humanity. Victoria's heart bled with anguiſh at the ſound; and ſhe was forced to catch the inquiſitor's arm, and cling to it, to ſupport her almoſt convulſed frame. But though ſhe had not power to articulate her wiſhes, the inquiſitor ſeemed perfectly to comprehend them; for, inſtantly taking her hand, he quickly turned into a cavity or kind of labyrinthian grotto in the rock; from whence, as they were proceeding up a ſhort but remarkably ſteep acclivity, Victoria ſuddenly heard a loud claſh of the wretched maniac's chain, ſucceeded by a dreadful yell, and ſounds of both were quickly repeated nearer and ſtill nearer: and little doubting that this miſerable and terrifying being had broken from confinement, and was then

purſuing them, ſhe uttered an involuntary ſhriek; which was inſtantly reiterated, in ſeveral different-toned voices, as if in deriſion of her.

Trembling with horror and diſmay, Victoria graſped the hand of her conductor; who turning to ſee the cauſe of her alarm, not appearing to have heard it, her torch gleamed upon the lower part of his face, his ſituation above her giving a full view of that. His hood ſtill concealed his eyes and forehead from ſight; but ſhe beheld ſufficient to awaken every dormant fear, and to tell her anticipating heart that deſtruction awaited her; ſince a more darkly diabolical, treacherous, and vindictive expreſſion of countenance ſhe had never before ſeen—no, not even in Garcias or Maratti.

Dreadful were now our heroine's ſenſations; but eſcape was impoſſible, and reſiſtance vain.

This man of myſtery at length conducted our terror-ſtruck heroine through a ſmall cavern to a low black door, at which they ſtopped; and no ſooner did their torches gleam upon it, than Victoria diſtinctly be-

held written upon it in ſtrange-formed characters of variegated colours and flaming brightneſs,

"THE CHAMBER OF DEATH!"

The incognito ſtruck forcibly againſt the door: a deep groan was heard. The inquiſitor pauſed—then knocked again: a groan more deep and hollow than the former aſſailed their ears. Again her guide pauſed—again he ſtruck the door, and ſlowly it receded as a paſſing-bell ſtruck up, tolling moſt heavily for a few moments; when ceaſing, the ſwelling notes of an organ were diſtinctly heard, accompanying a fine-toned tenor voice, chanting in ſolo, part of a requiem for a departed ſinner, and at a diſtance which prevented not every word from being clearly diſtinguiſhed.

Awed and diſmayed beyond conception, our trembling heroine followed the inquiſitor into this dreadful chamber, which was formed of rocks black as jet, and where the moſt impenetrable darkneſs was broken only by the torches which they bore—Victoria's ſhaking in her hand, which had ſcarcely

power to graſp it. The muſic at length ceaſed; and a ſound was heard like a ponderous iron chain falling gradually; and in one moment more the rock at the eaſt end of the chamber burſt open, and diſcovered an immenſe ſhrine moſt dazzlingly illuminated, emitting rays like the riſing luminary of day, on the ſarcophagus of which appeared recumbent the almoſt coloſſal figure of a Spaniſh knight, armed cap-a-pee, in black armour; and ere Victoria's diſtracted faculties allowed her to take a complete ſurvey of the ſcene before her, an awful trumpet ſounded, and the knight, who ſeemed to her only a monumental figure, ſlowly aroſe from his reſting-place. In his caſque nodded an immenſe plume of black feathers: in one hand he bore an enormous ſword; in the other a ſhield emblazoned with the emblems of death. Majeſtically he deſcended from the ſhrine, and advanced a few paces towards the inquiſitor and our amazed and terror-ſtruck heroine; when immediately his armour dropped off with a craſh, and diſcovered the figure of Death bearing an

uplifted dart; and at the ſame moment the inquiſitor fell motionleſs to the ground, and our diſmayed heroine with increaſed amazement beheld in the ſame inſtant the hideous phantom ſink from her view.

CHAP. XIII.

VICTORIA'S faculties were now in wildeſt tumult: ſhe knew not what to believe, except the certainty of divine omnipreſence; or what to doubt, but the ſtability of her own mind, which ſhe now found ſo dreadfully ſhaken that ſhe feared its final overthrow; and her firſt effort was to ſave that upon which all depended, by invoking the protection of the power that now only could avail her. Inſtantly ſhe dropped upon her knees, and fervently prayed to heaven for ſuccour, and for a reſtoration of her mental ſtrength, which the influence of deluſion was mining faſt. Pure was her piety, and her petitions were not offered in vain. The divine influence ſhe implored pervaded her whole ſoul; the terrors of ſuperſtition vaniſhed; ſhe aroſe from her knees undaunted; and in the moment when her ſituation called for all

the powers of her mind ſhe found them in fulleſt force collected.

Doubtful now if her myſterious guide was really dead, or only in a fit, all that might occur in either caſe paſſed rapidly through her imagination; and in either caſe deſtruction to her ſeemed equally inevitable. Could ſhe retrace the dreadful and intricate path the inquiſitor had led her thither by, it could avail her nothing, unacquainted as ſhe was with the ſecrets of the way that precipitated them into theſe horrid caverns; and ſhould ſhe remain where ſhe was, ſhe ſhould alike expoſe herſelf to the perils attendant upon the inquiſitor's poſſible recovery, and to the power of thoſe by whoſe means ſhe doubted not all the horrors ſhe had witneſſed were effected. To penetrate further on ſeemed now her only reſource; ſhe had no other means of eſcape: and through unexplored ways, although ſhe had every thing to fear, conviction had not ariſen to tell her ſhe had nothing to hope. It was to ſeek Urbino ſhe had entered the caverns; and now, with only Heaven for her guide, might ſhe not, in ſeeking for eſcape, be conducted

to his priſon? This idea no ſooner entered her mind than it took total poſſeſſion of it, and with all the energy of enthuſiaſtic hope ſhe prepared for the bold and arduous enterpriſe.

Around Victoria now looked with an eagerly-inquiring eye: the ſhrine ſeemed to have loſt half its brilliancy; but to her infinite joy ſhe beheld a door oppoſite to that they had entered by, and through it ſhe immediately determined upon attempting to go, but firſt wiſhed to poſſeſs herſelf of the inquiſitor's torch, which had been extinguiſhed in his fall, and alſo of his piſtols, to ſave herſelf, in caſe of his recovery and purſuit of her, from that fate ſhe had for ſome time thought he meant them to inflict: yet as ſhe was haſtily taking poſſeſſion of his torch, ſhe found that vital warmth glowed in the hand which held it; and as ſhe might be miſtaken in the opinion ſhe had formed of him,—and, even if ſhe was not, ſtill conſidering him a fellow creature,—ſhe would not deprive him of the only means of ſaving himſelf, but left him his lantern to guide him. Having with a fearful hand placed his piſtols in her belt, ſhe devoutly conſigned herſelf to the

protection of Heaven, and, haſtening to the door, found it opened upon a ſhort flight of ſteps, at the foot of which was another door, which ſhe found no difficulty in opening, and through it ſhe entered into a narrow and not very long paſſage: and at length reaching the termination of it, ſhe ruſhed up three or four broad ſteps, puſhed open a folding door, and ran, nay almoſt flew, along a narrow winding paſſage; from which ſhe was juſt emerging into a ſort of cavern, when ſhe ſtumbled over the breathleſs body of a man cold as marble, and in her fall her torch was extinguiſhed.

It is impoſſible for the feeble hiſtorian now to delineate the feelings of Victoria. But firmly perſuaded this body was Urbino's, ſhe raiſed her eyes to pray Heaven inſtantly to receive her laſt ſighs, when—oh! gentle ſympathiſing reader! if Victoria has yet intereſted you, will you not rejoice?—ſhe beheld a gleam of light emanating through ſome chinks in the rocks a little diſtance above her. With the ſpeed of a doe ſhe ſcrambled to the place, which, to her inexpreſſible rapture, ſhe diſcovered contained a door; which without heſitation ſhe puſhed in, and entered

a ſmall and ſingular kind of apartment, of a pyramidical form, in the centre of which a lamp was burning upon a ſtone table. Wildly Victoria ſnatched up the lamp; and, in turning to go out, firſt perceived that in one corner of this chamber, on a matted couch, lay extended a human figure wrapped in a ſacerdotal robe.—Could this be Urbino?—Her heart dilated with new-raiſed hope. She bounded to the couch; and to her utter amazement beheld, in an uneaſy ſlumber, the identical being whoſe apparently ſupernatural appearance in the library had relieved her from the graſp of Garcias the third morning of her captivity.

Cruel diſappointment to her hopes ſtruck heavily upon her heart; but, her ſoul on the wing to learn if her dreadful fears were juſt, ſhe flew back to the corſe, and found it was that of a perſon unknown to her. Grateful to Heaven for this great mercy, ſhe took up her extinguiſhed torch, and returned to the place where ſhe had ſeen the ſleeping man, reſolving to diſcloſe her ſituation to him, and to implore his pity and protection.

On re-entering his chamber, ſhe found the

venerable man raiſed a little on his elbow, the approach of death ſtrongly pourtrayed in his emaciated and woe-worn countenance. The vaniſhing of the light had diſſipated his ſlumber; and on Victoria's returning with it, by ſome ſudden effort of expiring nature he was enabled to ſit up erect; and devoutly claſping a crucifix which he held in his feeble hands—

"Heaven, I thank thee!" he exclaimed in a faltering and hollow tone—"I thank thee for directing the footſteps of this holy man to the death-bed of thy true penitent! Reverend father, you behold in me the moſt conſummate ſinner that ever offended againſt Heaven. I have inſulted my Creator by the commiſſion of crimes that even fiends might ſhrink from! Yet in this my laſt hour no death-bed horrors encompaſs me; ſince, firm in faith, I truſt that years ſpent in the moſt ſincere contrition that ever agoniſed the heart of man have expunged from the records of heaven the fell catalogue of my black crimes. But ere you proceed to give your benediction, or ſtrengthen my fleeting ſoul in hope, let me make all the atonement now in my

power to thoſe whom I have moſt injured." He here drew a packet from his boſom, and, preſenting it to our awed and amazed heroine, proceeded.

" As you conſider your holy vow ſacred, and as your ſoul hopes to taſte the pure joys of Paradiſe in the preſence of your beneficent Creator, of your bleſſed Redeemer, conceal this packet from every individual in the world, until Heaven permits you to deliver it as directed! If you love juſtice, if you eſtimate virtue, immediately ſeek out the injured youth to whom it is addreſſed! As you hope to proſper here and be bleſſed hereafter, be faithful to the ſacred truſt confided to you! and believe that Almighty Providence itſelf conſigns to your choſen hands the fate of my injured friend, and of him the world now call conte di Urbino."

" Urbino!" half ſhrieking cried Victoria, catching the death-clad hand of the agitated man—" do you then know the fate of conte Urbino?"

Her voice ſeemed to have a powerful effect upon the dying man; for ſhrinking from her graſp, he ſunk back on the couch in a

ſwoon. Victoria ſtrove to recall his fleeting ſenſes by the aid of ſome ſalts ſhe had in her pocket; and he had juſt opened his wiſtful eyes once more upon the world, when, to Victoria's utter diſmay, the inquiſitor entered the chamber, guided by the lantern ſhe had left with him.

"You have anticipated me in coming hither," ſaid he haughtily to her.

The moment the inquiſitor ſpoke, the dying man, with a univerſal convulſive ſhiver, eagerly exclaimed, "From him, above all the world, I conjure thee, conceal what I have entruſted to thee!"

"What ſay you?" ſaid the inquiſitor in a tone of fierce alarm and imperious interrogation.

"From the imbecility of ſickneſs, and from my being clad in a ſacerdotal habit," replied Victoria, "he miſtakes me, I ſuppoſe, for his confeſſor."

The dying man preſſed Victoria's hand in gratitude and approbation; while the inquiſitor, haſtily advancing, with the wild geſtures of phrenſied menace exclaimed:—

"Wretch! infernal miſcreant! what have

you dared to confeſs? Diabolical villain! accurſed fiend! you who plunged me into the gulf of iniquity, and gave to me all of miſery my life has known, have you baſely deſerted me? Have you ſacrificed me in your puſillanimous confeſſions? Whom have you been gloſſing over your own black crimes to, by implicating others? Speak, miſcreant! or I will cruſh you to atoms in my juſt vengeance!"

Victoria, ſhocked and alarmed for the ſafety of the feeble penitent, ſtarted from her ſupport of him, and, pointing to the piſtols in her belt, undauntedly addreſſed the infuriated inquiſitor.

"We have you in our power, you ſee. Advance no further, intemperate man. Diſturb not with phrenſied threats the laſt ſacred moments of the dying. Queſtion with calmneſs, and you will be anſwered by ſincerity."

The inquiſitor retreated a few paces, and, raiſing his hood a little, ſeemed to regard her for ſome moments with attentive amazement before he articulated—

"Extraordinary young creature! you al-

moſt impel me to forgive your being the deſtroyer of Urbino."

"Me the deſtroyer of Urbino!" exclaimed Victoria, half ſhrieking with horror ineffable.

"Had he never beheld thy fatal, fatal charms—had he never witneſſed thy accurſed faſcinations, he had now been ſafe at the château of conte Vicenza! Was it not to reſcue you from deſtruction the gallant and ill-fated youth came after you to this infernal caſtle, and perſuaded me to enter into his romantic, his dangerous ſchemes? For you he brought the vengeance of conte Vicenza and his diabolical confederates on him, and for you he is now probably ſuffering all the calamities, all the tortures that demoniac cruelty can inflict."

Victoria burſt into a convulſive paſſion of tears, which ſaved her from fainting.

"Say, what horrors do you allude to?" exclaimed the dying penitent in dreadful agitation. "What calamity has befallen the precious boy? Speak! I entreat, I implore you! Bury animoſities in this awful moment, I con-

jure you, and tell me, tell me all you know of him, Franciſco!"

"Franciſco!" ſaid Victoria in amaze and joy. "Suſpicion is then no more. You protected Urbino—you befriended me. You will not, I am perſuaded, however agitated by tumultuous paſſions, harm this dying man, or injure me: and your arms, therefore, I ſhould bluſh at retaining longer in my poſſeſſion." And now advancing towards the inquiſitor, ſhe gracefully reſtored his piſtols to him.

"You have conquered, lady Victoria! and was concealment longer in my power, I ſhould conſider it unjuſt to generoſity like yours," ſaid this man of myſtery, throwing back his cowl, and diſcovering to our aſtoniſhed heroine the features of the identical old man who had entered her chamber through the ſecret paſſage from the church, to reſcue the lovely Matilda. And no ſooner was his entire countenance diſplayed, than ſuſpicion received a conſiderable check; ſince the villany his overſhadowed viſage indicated was now firmly contradicted by the inge-

nuouſneſs that ſat conſpicuous on his brow, and by the mild expreſſion which now beamed from his quick and penetrating eyes. But in the ſubſequent part of this interview Victoria beheld, in his varying countenance, ſuch unequivocal expreſſion of almoſt every paſſion which could diſgrace or ornament the human mind, that ſhe doubted not but his heart was the repoſitory of the extremes of virtue and of vice.

"I am Franciſco," he continued, "and you now know, lady Victoria, that my life is at your mercy: but I dare confide in your prudence and generoſity. Hurried on by the phrenſy of deſpair for the unknown fate of Urbino, I allured you hither, though I knew not but deſtruction awaited us from ſome of Don Manuel's people. I truſted that the reſiſtleſs charms of your youth, your beauty, your faſcination of voice and manner, added to the ſingular proofs you have given of gratitude and attachment to my dear boy, would melt the hitherto impenetrable heart of this man, whom I once called friend, and win him into breaking an oath raſhly given to Don Manuel of concealing from me ſome

ſecret places in this caſtle: and had your influence failed, much I fear my deſperation would have led me on to ſacrifice you both to my vengeance; and as you have diſarmed my heart of its phrenſy, ſo I truſt you have ſubdued the contumacy of this man; and that he will no longer ſcruple to make all the atonement now in his power for his paſt offences, by imparting inſtantly to us every ſecret which can yield a hope of leading us to Urbino, who is, I am firmly perſuaded, now confined in ſome infernal den, where even the power of the Inquiſition cannot penetrate."

"Oh, dear ſuffering child! What ſad tidings do I hear!" exclaimed the penitent in all the anguiſh of deep-wrought deſpair. "Yes, Franciſco, I have lived to feel convinced that Heaven will not enrol in the pages of guilt the breach of oaths which bind us to the vicious.—Lead me—lead me then on, Franciſco, as far as my ſtiffening limbs and fleeting breath can carry me."

With that appearance of renovated ſtrength which energy from zeal ſupplied, the agitated penitent aroſe from his couch, ſupported

by Franciſco and Victoria, taught them to open a ſecret ſliding pannel in his chamber, and entered with them through it into a narrow paſſage. But it was the laſt flaſh of the expiring lamp of life. His ſupporters ſoon ſaw, with grief unutterable, the folly of the attempt; they bore him back to his couch, where in a few moments after he expired,—and with him every clue by which they hoped to have been led to the priſon of Urbino.

The deſpair of Franciſco exceeded all bounds of reaſon and piety: he breathed forth the moſt dreadful anathemas againſt the pale corſe before him; imprecated his own exiſtence and his crimes; flung himſelf upon the ground with the fury of a maniac; tore out handfuls of his hoary hair; and writhed about in all the wild phrenſy of ungoverned deſpair.

Victoria's anguiſh was not leſs poignant; but hers was the ſorrow of a Chriſtian. It ſtruck every fibre of ſenſibility with the rellеſt blows of ſoul-harrowing affliction: but with ſadly ſilent uncomplaining grief ſhe bore her miſery; for, remembering whoſe

hand had plucked the ſweet floweret of happineſs from her heart, ſhe bowed in reverential meek ſubmiſſion; and ſo beautifully touching appeared the light and ſhade of pious reſignation and heart-rending ſorrow that diffuſed themſelves over every line of her intereſting countenance, that Franciſco, ſtruck by its faſcinating eloquence, bluſhed at his own conduct; and, rallying all the good properties of his mind, ſoon, from the power of ſuch a pure example, felt the influence of Chriſtian fortitude, ſtealing from miſery its felleſt pangs, and breathing its mellifluent balm upon his ſorrows.

Heaven too beheld Victoria, approved and pitied. The wanderer Hope was remanded back to its ſoothing ſtation in her breaſt; ſuddenly her ſenſes awakened upon new projects; haſtily ſhe ſnatched up her torch, and, lighting it, ſaid firmly to Franciſco—

"By the deceaſed's having diſcovered yon paſſage to us, in compliance with your wiſh of participating with him in all the ſecrets of this caſtle, we muſt naturally conclude that through yon paſſage you would have been conducted to the ſpot probably of the moſt

importance. Let us then purſue the path of Hope which Providence ſeems to have opened to us; and, guided by all-pitying Heaven, our attempt may be crowned with the bleſſing of ſucceſs."

Franciſco ſtarted from the ground, animated by a cheering ray of that hope which now thrilled through every fibre of her frame; and with all the zeal of ardent fond ſolicitude they re-entered the paſſage, exploring every ſpot of it with the wiſtful ſcrutiny their painful ſolicitude forcibly prompted. This paſſage led them ſeveral hundred feet from the chamber of the deceaſed penitent, to a narrow cylindrical ſtaircaſe, which they haſtily aſcended; and, after mounting innumerable ſteps, at length reached a door, which without difficulty Franciſco opened, being well acquainted with the nature of the lock which faſtened it; and on paſſing through the door, they found themſelves in a room ornamented with a number of ſtatues; in fact, the very apartment Juan had informed Victoria and her terrified companions was the anatomy chamber.

Franciſco was dreadfully diſappointed and

chagrined on finding their ſearch terminate in a room which had the preceding morning undergone the moſt minute ſcrutiny, from Diego's having informed the officials of its being a chamber where many unfortunate captives had been conveyed to, and never been heard of more.

" And from that very myſterious circumſtance," ſaid Victoria, " as well as from this room being evidently the firſt place thought of by the poor deceaſed penitent, have we not juſt reaſon to conjecture ſome undeveloped ſecret is attached to it?"

Franciſco conſidered her ſuggeſtions concluſive, and they were about to renew the ſcrutiny, when the caſtle clock ſtruck five.

" We muſt inſtantly ſeparate," ſaid Franciſco; " and you muſt now only appear to know me as an inquiſitor: you can eaſily conceive the fatal conſequences that muſt enſue to me was it diſcovered that I had any knowledge of this caſtle, and concealed it from the auguſt ſynod of which I am a member."

" You may place implicit confidence in my faith and prudence," replied Victoria;

" but when, when ſhall we renew our anxious ſearch?"

" By the time my brothers aſſemble," ſaid Franciſco, " I ſhall have framed ſome plea for having this apartment more minutely ſcrutiniſed; and ſhould our anxious wiſhes not be gratified during this day, we will meet again at night to inveſtigate the paſſage once again, and to examine my late friend's chamber for papers that may yield the diſcovery we pant for."

The packet confided to Victoria's care, as it was only to be delivered to Urbino, could afford no clue to his preſent fate; and as from Franciſco ſhe was particularly to conceal the ſolemn depoſit, ſhe mentioned it not of courſe.

Franciſco continued—" Should no attempt of ours ſucceed, the caſtle ſhall be raſed; but much time muſt neceſſarily elapſe before that laborious undertaking can be accompliſhed; and to ſave Urbino we can only hope from immediate effects. But I muſt now haſten to conduct you, by a private way, to your chamber, ſince Diego and Thomas have ſtationed themſelves in the library to guard you;

and from their knowledge particularly I wiſh to conceal myſelf: after what they have done, I cannot but fear their perfidy, and wiſh them to believe that I abſconded with the reſt of the caſtle community."

Franciſco now led our ſad and agitated heroine through the caſtle vaults into ſome winding paſſages; from whence he ſafely conducted her into his own apartments, contiguous to Sebaſtian's; into whoſe ſtudy he haſtily admitted her, and, giving her his parting benediction, cautiouſly cloſed the entrance after him.

CHAP. XIV.

On returning to her chamber, Victoria found, to her infinite ſatisfaction, Octavia ſtill buried in a profound ſleep; and ſo completely ſubdued by fatigue was her own frame, and ſo dreadfully agitated was her mind, from all the ſhocks it had ſo recently ſuſtained, that ſhe ſunk into the firſt ſeat ſhe came to; and, giving free indulgence to a friendly ſhower of tears, found her agoniſed heart ſo much relieved by them, that ſhe at length determined upon going to bed: where, about ſeven o'clock, from downright fatigue of mind and frame, "tired Nature's ſweet reſtorer" for once lit on lids ſullied by many tears. From her deep ſlumber Octavia took care not to diſturb her; and keeping all around her in perfect ſtillneſs, the poor wearied Victoria ſlept until paſt eleven, when ſhe heard that Diego was gone with fathers Anſelmo, Pierre, Leonard, St. Romaine, and the principal offi-

cials, to attend a ſpecial meeting of the Inquiſition at Cadaques, and that Thomas had therefore been deputed to go in Diego's ſtead, to convey intelligence to ſignora Farinelli and Roſolia, and to conduct them to the caſtle. And while our heroine was making a haſty toilet, previous to the renewal of her anxious ſearch, it occurred to her, that from the accounts Tereſa could poſſibly give of Matilda might be collected ſome information of importance: ſhe therefore entreated the good old woman, while ſhe was going through the mock ceremony of breakfaſting, to give her every particle of intelligence ſhe could recollect relative to the beautiful Matilda; and Tereſa, ever eager to oblige Victoria, inſtantly complied.

" In a few evenings after I was releaſed from my dungeon," ſaid Tereſa, " as I was ſetting the parlour in order for ſupper, my maſter haſtily entered, bearing in his arms a lady in a religious habit, who was in a ſwoon. He laid her upon a couch with great tenderneſs, although he appeared dreadfully agitated. I inſtantly fetched water, and all the reſtoratives I could get, and

my efforts for her recovery were at length crowned with ſucceſs, and ſhe opened a pair of eyes almoſt as beautiful as your own, donna; but their expreſſion at that time was very wild. She ſighed heavily, and, looking wiſtfully around her, beheld Don Manuel; when, uttering a piercing ſhriek, ſhe relapſed into a ſwoon, out of which it was not in our power to recover her. My maſter now ſeemed almoſt diſtracted with fears about her, but at length, ſeeming to recollect himſelf, he ordered me to ſummon Inigo, a ſurgeon, who was compelled to open a vein in one of her arms before ſhe diſcovered any ſymptom of returning reſpiration. By order of Inigo ſhe was inſtantly conveyed to bed; and I ſat up with her all night, during which I verily believe ſhe never for one inſtant ceaſed weeping; and often I heard her call upbraidingly upon ſome one named Urbino, as if he had forſaken her, and left her a prey to villany.

" At the very firſt dawn of day ſhe would get up and dreſs herſelf, not ſuffering me to aſſiſt her; ſo much ſhe ſeemed to fear and hate me, as belonging to Don Manuel.

At seven I left her to go about my household business; and when I summoned her to breakfast, she haughtily and peremptorily refused to attend. On repeating this to Don Manuel he seemed much hurt, and desired me to inform her, if she would not breakfast with him, he would with her; upon which she condescended to go down; but without speaking to or taking the least notice of him, she sullenly flung herself into the first seat she came to. On Don Manuel's politely offering her a cup of chocolate, she knocked it out of his hand upon the floor; and while I was employed in wiping it up, my master, in evident mortification, said to her, 'This violence, Matilda, will avail you nothing, since you are now irrevocably in my power. Your adored Urbino, your invincible champion, has forsaken you, drawn from you by the resistless charms of the most fascinating, the most truly amiable and interesting woman that *now* adorns the world. One woman only ever equalled her, and she forsook me as Urbino has abandoned you. Yes, Matilda, you now know what it is to be scorned and rejected. Victoria, soon, very

ſoon, taught inconſtancy to your loved Urbino; while I, although I beheld with admiration unparalleled, and acknowledged with reverence almoſt idolatrous, her matchleſs perfections, ſtood firm in my attachment to you—an attachment which your mother ſanctioned; for, in the fell moment of her fatal death, the angel gave you to my arms; a ſaint, a martyred ſaint, bequeathed you to me; and though you have long been baſely eſtranged from my protection, death only now ſhall tear you from me! Urbino has abandoned you; Franciſco, the falſe uſurper of my right, is now many leagues off, gone on important buſineſs to the ſee of Rome. You are, therefore, wholly in my power; and not all your violence, your diſdain, your tears, or ſupplications, ſhall prevent my making you mine irrevocably, or hinder my fulfilling the will of your mother, or my endeavouring to inſpire you with pity for the man whoſe fair proſpects in life your mother blaſted, whoſe happineſs ſhe wreſted from him, and who, through her derelict̃ion, was plunged into every error he has ſince committed!'

" Never ſhall I forget the ſparkling fire which now flaſhed from her eyes; and ſtarting from her ſeat, ſhe ſeemed in ſoul and ſtature high as the caſtle towers; and in a tone of the moſt vehement indignation ſhe exclaimed—

" ' Dare not, vile traducer of innocence, to affirm that my mother ever beheld you with partiality, or bequeathed her child to ſuch a fiend as you are! No, no; ſurely her pure ſoul recoiled from you and vice as I do now! But diſappointed, ungoverned, and diabolical enmity leads you on, vindictive as you are, to wreak on me the vengeance you ſay you owe Franciſco for protecting me. I know I am in your power; and knowing you, know all I have to dread from villany unequaled. Put me to all the tortures which your barbarous heart can think of; tear me piece-meal; but you ſhall not ſubdue my contempt and indignation, or teach my heart to feel any thing for you but what my tongue will ever glory in avowing as long as the power of articulation is ſpared to me—ſcorn, hatred, diſguſt, ab-

horrence, the moſt deadly, the moſt implacable!'

"You muſt wonder, donna, how I can remember all their fine ſayings ſo well; but never can I forget one word; for they ſpoke ſo impreſſively, that all they ſaid ſeemed ſtamped at once upon the memory.

"Don Manuel, trembling with rage, now ordered me to quit the room; and I was ſo afraid leſt ſhe ſhould, by her ill-timed violence, exaſperate him to kill her, that I loitered about the door for ſome moments; when I heard my maſter talking a great deal to her, firſt angrily, then tenderly: but all would not do, for not one word could he get from her in return.

"Several days paſſed away without any particular incident to mark it; Don Manuel ſtriving to gain the donna's regard by treating her with the greateſt reſpect and tenderneſs, but to no effect. More ſullen and diſdainful ſhe became, if poſſible, every hour; and in his abſence ſhe would weep and lament ſo bitterly, and give herſelf up ſo totally to deſpair, that I trembled for the conſequence; and uſed to

be ever on the watch, leſt the phrenſy of her grief ſhould precipitate her into her eternal deſtruction. Sometimes ſhe would fervently pray to Heaven for protection: but in doing ſo, it ſeemed to me more from a conviction that it was right to do it, than from any confidence ſhe had in prayers proving of much advantage, ſince ſhe never aroſe from her knees with that ſweet ſmile of Chriſtian reſignation that I have obſerved in you, donna. Either her ſorrows were greater than yours, or her heart leſs compliant to the will of Heaven. Poor young creature! the only conſolation ſhe ſeemed to have was from a gold chain which hung round her neck, which ſhe would kiſs and cry over for hours together: and when I became leſs hateful to her, ſhe told me the picture of a very dear friend had hung to it, but which, by ſome ſtrange myſtery, ſhe had loſt from her pocket very ſhortly after he had ſent it to her from Madrid. I think it was conte Urbino's picture; and the loſs of it, ſhe ſaid, had greatly grieved her."

Victoria bluſhed, and felt very much diſ-

treſſed that ſhe had, though innocently, augmented the ſorrows of the afflicted. Tereſa continued—

" In her moments of anguiſh ſhe would ſeem to upbraid this conte Urbino for having left her; although when Don Manuel (and he appeared to take a malicious pleaſure in doing it) would tauntingly remind her of Urbino's inconſtancy, ſhe would dart ſuch looks of ſcorn and triumph at him, that I could not tell what to make out of them.

" At length that harbinger of miſchief, Garcias, appeared, from whoſe long abſence Don Manuel had been made uneaſy: but he and his vile crew, by ſome effort of Belzebub's, eſcaped from ſhipwreck, and returned ſwearing vengeance againſt Diego and Urbino, who I now found was that ſweet-mannered black Hippolyto; for I heard Don Manuel tell Garcias ſo, and that Donna Matilda had made the diſcovery, in the anguiſh of her heart, on her firſt falling into my maſter's hands. But the news of yours and conte Urbino's eſcape from Gar-

cias ſeemed to give her new life; and for a time ſhe appeared to ſet at defiance the power of Don Manuel, whom ſhe would ſcoff, and ſay ſuch things to him that I wonder ſhe did not provoke him to kill her: but, by ſome infatuation, the worſe ſhe treated him the more his love increaſed. And yet his love was a ſtrange kind too, ſince it led him on to cruelties againſt the object of it; while to afflict you, whom he was not in love with, as I heard him tell Alonzo, gave him the moſt ſenſible pain: and he added, 'that he never converſed with you that he did not find an admiration for virtue ariſing in his breaſt; nor could he look on you without his heart's feeling humaniſed: and when, in compliance with his friend's requeſt, he tortured you by his profeſſions of love, he could have folded you in his arms with paternal affection, and ſhed tears for your perſecutions—That had he a child like you, he would give up his wicked courſes, and in your ſweet ſociety learn to become a fit companion for ſuch matchleſs purity.'

" I now ſoon found that Garcias had brought ſome intelligence with him that ſadly afflicted my maſter; and I, alas! too ſoon found out what it was: for, one day, not minding I was in the room, Don Manuel ſaid to Garcias, 'I would give half my poſſeſſions to be aſſured of that ſhattered veſſel's having eſcaped the fury of the tempeſt, and that lady Victoria was in a place of ſafety.' Ah, how I grieved about you! But I did not mention it to Donna Matilda, becauſe I thought ſhe had ſorrows enough without being led to fear for the ſafety of conte Urbino, whom ſhe ſo fondly loved.

" Soon after Garcias returned, Don Manuel's conduct to the poor donna changed materially. He became ſtern and haughty, often threatening her with his vengeance, and ſaying cruel things to her which alarmed and afflicted her: ſo I ventured to recommend a change of manner to her, as being likely to effect one in my maſter; giving you, dear donna, for an example of patient mildneſs that won his heart to pity. She would liſten with apparent plea-

ſure, for an hour together, to my hiſtories about you; and make me ſhow her where you uſed to ſit, to walk, and ſleep, and tell her how you employed yourſelf: and very anxious ſhe was indeed to learn if I knew of your having any attachment of the tender kind; and was always aſking if you ever held any converſations with Hippolyto, and if he ſeemed to be in your favour. And when I would tell her all the notice I had ever ſeen you beſtow upon Hippolyto, and that I believed you were tenderly attached to ſome gentleman named Alphonſo, ſhe would colour up like vermilion, and, her eyes dancing with pleaſure, ſhe would ſeem all joy, and forget for the moment her own misfortunes. Then, again, I muſt deſcribe your face and figure repeatedly, until ſhe would grow quite ſad; and ſay, 'how happy you were in being beloved by a man who merited your tendereſt affections; whilſt ſhe, a poor deſerted wretched being, was doomed to ſigh her life away in hopeleſſneſs, her affections fixed where now ſhe muſt ever deſpair of meeting

a return!' Then would ſhe break from me, and ſhut herſelf up in her chamber to weep.

"At laſt, four days ſince, I was ſummoned to her by my maſter, who ſeemed in great alarm and agitation. She was in ſtrong hyſterics; and on her coming a little to herſelf, I learned from her that Don Manuel had juſt imparted ſome dreadful news to her; and had given her only twenty-four hours to determine upon becoming his wife, or to witneſs the execution of her deareſt friends: and never ſhall I forget the agony of her mind during that day and night.

"At the appointed time next morning Don Manuel demanded her determination; when, from ſome unaccountable fit of caprice, ſhe ſuddenly appeared to diſbelieve the news he had told her, and peremptorily refuſed to be his wife: upon which Don Manuel, and that vile Garcias, in deſpite of her ſhrieks and her vehement reſiſtance, bore her off, poor hapleſs creature! to that dreadful chamber where Theodore's mother was diſpoſed of, and I ſaw

the poor donna no more—but think they did not kill her; for on the next day I saw Juan put a flask of wine, a jar of water, a chicken, and some bread, into a basket, which he took into the parlour. My anxiety led me to watch; and in a very little time after I saw my master go up the grand staircase with that very basket and a lantern in his hand. I followed unobserved, and saw him enter that very chamber."

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed Victoria, starting from her seat; for, on hearing of a lantern, the recollection of the ruffian she had seen enter that apartment the morning she went to summon aid for Hero suddenly recurred, with the circumstance of his mysterious vanishing in the embrace of a colossal figure; all of which incidents, improbable as it may seem, had lain dormant in her memory until that moment: for so many and extraordinary had been the events she had encountered since her exile from conte di Vicenza's château, that many not immediately appertaining to her own fate she had forgotten; while many others she had looked upon as the visions of a dis-

turbed mind, and had therefore ſtrove to baniſh them from her memory. But now hope and conviction aroſe with remembrance in her mind; and eagerly deſiring ſignora Octavia and Tereſa to follow her, ſhe ran, or rather flew, borne on the pinions of hope, to the myſterious apartment. Octavia cloſely purſued her; and Tereſa, although diſmayed, was led on by affection to follow our poor agitated heroine, who in a coloſſal ſtatue of Proſerpine recog niſed the figure ſhe had long believed a phantom preſented by terror to her appalled imagination.

Minutely now Victoria examined the ſtatue; and, to the increaſed ſurpriſe of her wondering companions, preſſed her hands againſt every ſpot of it within her reach, in hopes of finding the ſecret ſpring which actuated the movements of this automaton—but without effect. At length, exhauſted by diſappointment, that tortured every fibre of her bleeding heart, and irritated her ſhattered nerves almoſt to phrenſy, ſhe ſtamped her foot againſt the ground in hopeleſs impa-

tience; and the ſtatue, immediately advancing, expanded its arms, and, receiving Victoria within its body, cloſed upon her, while in retrograde motion it regained its original ſtation.

CHAP. XV.

By a gleam of light from below, Victoria ſaw that underneath the baſe of the ſtatue was a ſhort flight of ſteps, which ſhe heſitated not to deſcend, although for a moment diſmayed by the piercing ſhrieks of Octavia and Tereſa, which ſhe diſtinctly heard. From the foot of the ſtairs ſhe entered a path that wound up the outſide of one of the caſtle towers, ſo ingeniouſly contrived as to preclude all poſſibility of perſons paſſing along it being ſeen by any one in or about the caſtle. Up this paſs Victoria now ſwiftly trod, her heart beating high with hope, and praying fervently to Heaven for ſucceſs. At length ſhe reached a platform of about thirty feet diameter, which terminated the tower, and upon which a Gothic ſpire aroſe. Here, upon examination, ſhe diſcovered a low iron door moſt curiouſly contrived within a niche in the ſpire. With much difficulty, from trepidation and want of ſufficient

ſtrength, ſhe removed ſome iron bars which faſtened it; and on opening the door ſhe ſaw a flight of ſteps, up which ſhe haſtened, although with no other light to guide her than the feeble rays which ſome cracks in the building admitted. Soon ſhe reached the termination of the ſtairs, and ſaw before her a large dark bulk, but of what nature the want of light would not permit her to diſtinguiſh; and much ſhe had now to deplore her own precipitance, that ſent her on this enterpriſe without a light, although aware, by example, of its neceſſity.

A chink in the wall, however, ſoon diſcovered to her a paſſage to the left; and while ſhe heſitated whether to proceed, or return for a light, ſhe diſtinctly heard a deep groan of anguiſh. Heſitation was now no more; rapidly ſhe advanced along the paſſage, following the ſound of ſighs and groans, which at ſhort intervals were repeated. After proceeding ſome paces, ſhe found the ſtone work of the bulk over which her right hand paſſed, as a guide to her ſteps, give place to an iron grating, through which the piteous ſounds of diſtreſs iſſued.

" Speak!" cried Victoria impetuouſly, no longer able to reſtrain her feeling, " ſpeak, and tell me is Urbino here?"

" Who calls?" replied a female voice, in tones ſo feeble, that ſcarcely could they be diſtinguiſhed.

"Ah, merciful God! this muſt be Matilda."

"Who comes at laſt to cloſe Matilda's eyes?" ſaid the miſerable captive.

" A friend, come to releaſe you from priſon, to reſtore you to liberty and to happineſs," exclaimed our now imprudent heroine.

Matilda anſwered not, although repeatedly called to in the ſweeteſt tones of kindneſs and conſolation by Victoria, who began to deplore her own precipitance more than ever, being now convinced that joy and ſurpriſe had proved too powerful for the exhauſted ſpirits of the lovely victim of unmerited cruelty.

Accuſtomed in ſome degree to the change of light, Victoria at length, aided by a ſmall chink in the ſpire, could diſtinguiſh the place ſhe ſtood before was a grated door, that formed almoſt one ſide of

a ſmall priſon, in one corner of which ſhe could plainly diſcern a female lying extended, without motion, upon a truſs of ſtraw. She no longer doubted Matilda's having fainted, and ſhe felt the moſt painful impatience to get to her aſſiſtance; but, upon examination of the grate, ſhe found it faſtened by an immenſe padlock, that derided all her efforts to gain an entrance; and therefore, ſwift of foot as humanity and enthuſiaſm could waft her, ſhe haſtened away to procure every requiſite aid; and, by the time ſhe reached the baſe of the ſpire, a painful thought occurred, which, until the ſafety of another was involved, had never once obtruded itſelf—but it now ſtruck her with diſmay; for, ſhould ſhe not be able to develop the ſecret of effecting her return through the automaton, what would become of Matilda, who required immediate aſſiſtance? and what of herſelf, ſhould the removal of the ſtatue be found impoſſible, or at leaſt a tedious proceſs? But ſoon recovering her reliance upon Heaven, ſhe proceeded, aſſured the Power who led her there would guide her back; and

ere ſhe had got half way down the tower, a tumult of voices, accompanied by loud hammering, aſſailed her ears; and in a moment more ſhe was met in her path by ſome of the brotherhood left to guard the caſtle, attended by Octavia Bernini; who, direfully alarmed for Victoria's ſafety, had flown to the officials, and informed them where the temerity of lady Victoria had precipitated her; and, directed by Octavia, the pioneers of the inquiſitorial corps ſoon broke down the automaton, and cleared the way to an unimpeded paſſage.

Octavia was almoſt as much overjoyed to ſee our heroine as Victoria felt at beholding the aſſiſtance ſhe wanted for Matilda ſo near. Briefly ſhe now related to the officials the diſcovery ſhe had made; and they having lights and forcing implements with them, inſtantly preſſed forward; but, not being agitated like Victoria, ſoon diſtanced her, and had wrenched open a grated door before ſhe and Bernini reached them; which they did juſt time enough to hear the captive found was an old man, and not a female as lady Victoria had imagined. Our

heroine, in breathleſs agitation, ruſhed forward, and beheld her venerable friend Sebaſtian.

Almoſt frantic with the joy of finding, and the fear of again being deprived of him by death, Victoria earneſtly implored the officials to bear him to ſome adjoining chamber, where immediate aſſiſtance might effect his recovery; and with great humanity he was conveyed, attended by our anxious heroine, to that very room from whence Urbino had releaſed her from the power of Vicenza, where Sebaſtian was now laid upon a bed, and the overjoyed Tereſa diſpatched for wine and other reſtoratives, which one of the Dominicans recommended as likely to be of ſervice in recovering him from that horrid ſtupor into which want of nouriſhment and a free circulation of air had evidently thrown him.

Victoria now entreated the officials to delay no longer in ſeeking for the female who was confined in the ſame ſpire from whence they had liberated Sebaſtian. Willingly they haſtened to comply with her requeſt; but ere they had mounted half way up the

tower, they met ſome of their aſſociates bearing the beautiful Matilda, who was ſtill in a ſwoon, and whom they conveyed to a chamber approximate to that now occupied by Sebaſtian.

The men, when haſtening to liberate the captive diſcovered by Victoria, had providentially turned to the right inſtead of the left, by which means Sebaſtian was ſo ſoon found; and thoſe who remained behind to ſeek the female whom Victoria aſſured them was poſitively there, ſoon found that a lobby encircled the two priſons in which Sebaſtian and Matilda had been confined.

Matilda, by the application of proper ſpecifics, ſoon recovered from her ſwoon; but appriſed too haſtily of her effectual releaſe from the power of Don Manuel by poor Tereſa, to whom the care of Matilda had been deputed, joy had the moſt alarming effect upon her long-tortured mind and enfeebled frame; and the return of father Pierre was impatiently longed for, both upon her account and Sebaſtian's, by Victoria, who looked upon the latter to be in imminent danger.

With extreme difficulty Victoria poured a tea-ſpoonful of cordial wine down Sebaſtian's throat; and in a few moments after ſhe, with infinite trouble, effected his ſwallowing another. As much air as poſſible ſhe had admitted into the room; while, to reſtore vital warmth to his extremities, the already-mentioned Dominican ordered friction with brandy to be applied; and every method which his judgment or Victoria's anxiety could ſuggeſt, as likely to promote Sebaſtian's recovery, the men cheerfully performed; while Octavia, at our heroine's requeſt, attended while ſome more of the inquiſitorial legions minutely inſpected the ſpire, and the avenues leading to it, with the anxious hope of diſcovering the priſon of Urbino, who they now little doubted was, as Victoria had poſitively affirmed, confined in the caſtle, and for whoſe fate the ſituation Sebaſtian was juſt found in created the utmoſt pity and ſolicitude.

Not until Victoria had cauſed her patient to ſwallow ſeveral ſpoonfuls of wine did he betray any ſymptom congenial to her anxious wiſhes; when opening his eyes

they wandered vacantly, totally unconſcious of every ſurrounding object. But even from this effort of nature our ardent heroine's fond hopes found ſomething to reſt upon; and juſt at this moment ſignora Bernini, with one of the officials, returned in dejection to aſſure her, that, after the moſt minute ſcrutiny, they were all painfully convinced, from the formation of the ſpire, no other priſon could poſſibly communicate with it, or any of the places round.

CHAP. XVI.

VICTORIA was dreadfully disappointed; and after a pause of mournful agonising thought she addressed the official, who was in fact the very man of all the troop the easiest to be worked upon. He was a young Dominican priest of very moderate talents, pitiably ignorant, ever under the dominion of superstitious influence, and perpetually fancying that he felt divine inspiration. He possessed a feeling heart, and, notwithstanding his sacerdotal vow, still found a beautiful woman an object of interest.

"There are four towers to this castle," said Victoria with tremulous anxiety, "and think you, holy father, it is improbable that, upon inspection, we might find in the other three, prisons similar to those from which Providence has allowed us to emancipate these helpless captives?"

The official started. "Providence, I am

persuaded, leads you on," he replied; "for well I remember, in our researches here, to have observed in the south wing a chamber exactly corresponding with that you have just made this fortunate discovery in, where on the floor we found a poniard, and saw sprinkled about the trace of newly-shed blood; from which circumstances we naturally concluded some diabolical transaction had recently been committed there."

A thrill of direful horror shot through Victoria's agonised heart. "Was it, could it be, the blood of Urbino?" He would not without resistance (if resistance was in his power), she well knew, suffer himself to be dragged to prison; and the blood might therefore as possibly be that of his opponents as his own. Then, with a heart throbbing with the painful extremes of anxious hope and fear, she resigned the care of Sebastian to Octavia; and, fervently invoking the auspices of Heaven, hastened with the official and several of his associates and attendants to the chamber in the south wing, before the door of which was placed a beautiful statue of Amphitrite; and upon entering the room Victoria

found it quite out of repair, and much more desolate than that in the opposite point. At the upper end of this apartment stood a colossal figure of Pluto, corresponding exactly with that of Proserpine in the other chamber.

In a few moments the statue of Pluto was broken down, and beneath where it stood was discovered a flight of steps which led to a passage round the outside of the tower, similar to that so recently found out. Hastily now our heroine and her companions made their way to the platform, where finding an open entrance into the spire, Victoria's sanguine hopes sustained a painful blow; since, was there any one above in confinement, she naturally concluded the way up would not have been left so totally unguarded. However, she proceeded with her attendants up a staircase containing more steps than the one in the north spire, and which at length terminated, leading them into a kind of gallery, in the centre of which stood a pillar about four feet in height, and six in diameter.

Within the spire they plainly saw no prison could possibly be; but the secret way leading to it, and this gallery surrounding,

could not certainly have been formed without some designation: and after the most earnest investigation, and a diversity of opinions, it was believed by all, that the pillar contained a staircase leading to the tower beneath, where probably a prison was; but how to develop the means of removing the pillar was a matter of more perplexity. In vain they strove to break it down; it derided all their strength, and the ingenuity of their implements.

At length, when they were unwillingly about to relinquish the attempt, a small brass ring was discovered by Victoria concealed amid the deep carvings of the pillar; when upon raising it, to learn if possible what it could lead to, the sound of an iron chain falling gradually was distinguished; and they conjecturing the cause and effect, tried again, and with ease now removed the cornice of the column; when to their utter dismay and amazement they beheld not a staircase as they expected, but the mouth, as it seemed, of a draw-well. Suspended to a chain of apparently a prodigious length was a piece of machinery, containing an iron arm-chair, with a body chain, and hand-cuffs fastened to it;

and on each side of this chair was fixed a kind of bucket, evidently meant to carry the barbarous ruffians employed to precipitate the hapless victim of cruelty into some dreadful fate below.

All shuddered, but all were silent; since the conjectures of what this shocking preparation led to were almost too horrible to reveal.

Victoria, tortured by the most soul-harrowing apprehensions, at length mournfully and tremulously demanded if the official would not proceed.

"Proceed!" exclaimed he, recoiling. "Most assuredly not. None but a company of maniacs, ignorant as we are of what this terrible machinery may lead to, would venture into it."

"Merciful Heaven!" cried Victoria in an agony of grief and disappointment; "and will no one proceed in the path of humanity because its termination is uncertain?"

"No: we will not venture," was firmly re-iterated by all. Victoria burst into a convulsive passion of tears; and as she despairingly hung over this terrific cylinder she espied a piece of white rag, hitched in among the

machinery of the chair; and as every thing about this place was now of consequence to her, she eagerly caught up the rag; when, oh! reader, conceive, for we cannot pourtray, the tumult it awakened in her agitated mind! for, on beholding the initials of her own name, she recognised it to be a fragment of the identical handkerchief she had bound round Thomas's wound, and which Urbino had afterwards taken into his own possession.

Proof strong as holy writ was this that Urbino had been precipitated down this tube of destruction; and now almost frantically she implored some of the brotherhood to descend in search of him; but to no purpose. All remained inflexible to her eloquent entreaties, her heart-rending grief, the claims of humanity, or the immense reward she offered.

"Alas! my daughter," said the official, almost affected to tears, "your entreaties are, must be vain; since no being upon earth, I am persuaded, can be found possessed of sufficient temerity to venture down."

"Yes, one!" she cried with firmness: "yes, one; and that being am I!"

"You!" exclaimed the official: "you! Insanity! No never, never shall you be permitted so rashly to precipitate yourself into destruction, into the den of devouring beasts of prey, into the mouth of some horrid monster of the deep, into some dreadful gulf or whirlpool! I shudder, I tremble, I cannot longer think upon the horrors you have inspired, or allow you my daughter, to contemplate further this dreadful vortex of perdition!"

"What are these buckets meant for?" replied Victoria calmly. "Think you, holy father, the ruffians, whom they evidently were formed to convey down, would go where inevitable destruction awaited them?"

"Certainly not," the priest replied: "but they knew whither they were going, and went no further than safety would permit; and, aware of the dangers that lay before them, they were prepared to shun them: while you, my daughter, ignorant as you are of all below, might rush at once into destruction! No, you shall not go: the castle will ere long be rased, and in time we shall, by that means, learn to what this leads."

"In time!" repeated Victoria: "yes, when too late to save Urbino! Remember the state we have found that venerable man reduced to. Delay is dangerous, is criminal; and if you oppose my descent, my immediate descent, the blood of Urbino be on your head!" She raised her hands and eyes to heaven, and sinking upon her knees emphatically said: "Oh! just and mighty Creator of the Universe! if by this man I am prevented from seeking my husband to give him instant assistance, forgive his enemies, and to this man's obduracy place his murder!"

The official shuddered. "I will not prevent your going, my daughter; I will only strongly advise you against such rashness."

"Advise me," she replied, "to stay and expire by tortures more excruciating than any I can meet with in the performance of my duty!"

The official gazed upon her, until the augmenting resolution that marked her manner, the fire of enthusiasm which illumined her eyes, he felt persuaded were inspired by some supernatural influence, and that it would be criminal in him longer to oppose what

seemed almost the will of Heaven. "Well, go, my daughter," he at length said: "but your rashness and obstinacy be upon your own head."

"Heaven's care will be with me, and with you too, holy father, if you assist me in saving the life of Urbino."

The official turned pale as death. "What do you expect of me?" said he in alarm.

"Give me your solemn promise to remain here, carefully to watch the agitation of the chain, to learn from that, if I am permitted to return, when it is my wish to be elevated. Only until the return of my friends from Cadaques do I mean your promise to extend; for, when they are informed of where I am, I doubt not of their proving attentive sentinels."

"Solemnly I promise, as I hope to find favour in the sight of my Redeemer, never to quit my attentive guard here while a hope exists of your return. Yet let me entreat, implore you to delay this terrible enterprise until your friends return from Cadaques;" and the tears now rolled down the official's cheeks.

Victoria, apprehensive of being prevented, and painfully aware of the fatal consequences of delay, would not attend to this man's advice or wishes, but requested the soldiers to supply her immediately with a torch, a lantern, and some kind of cordial likely to be serviceable to Urbino should she find him still living. Instantly her request was complied with; and making a convenient disposition of those things, she, after devoutly on her knees imploring the protection of Heaven, placed herself in the iron chair, and with a firm voice gave orders for lowering it.

The official and three other priests present now sunk upon their knees and prayed fervently aloud for her success and preservation, while the laymen slowly and sorrowfully unrolled the chain that was, as they feared, to precipitate this young and beautiful creature into inevitable destruction. The moment was awful: pity, dismay, and anxiety, were strongly pourtrayed on every countenance except Victoria's, where faith, hope, and charity beamed celestially, as she raised her beautiful hands and eyes in pious supplications to Mercy's throne. At length she was lost

to view: the priests chanted in solemn sadness a farewell benediction. The chain creaked direfully its harsh responses. The lessening voice of Victoria was heard giving melody to the choir. The soldiers, subdued, would have precipitately drawn her up again, had not the official, still believing in the supernatural influence, and bound by his solemn promise to her wishes, exerted his authority, which now only could enforce from the men obedience.

Slowly Victoria descended upwards of fifty fathoms, her mind in a state of hope and fear, of courage and apprehension blended, that may possibly be imagined, yet cannot be described; but enveloped in the shield of true piety she was enabled to sustain the conflict.

The chain at length was all unrolled, and Victoria found herself about six feet below the tube, in a long and narrow cavern, through which an inlet of the sea murmured mournfully, dashing in awful solemnity its waves against the projection of the rocks on each side in its slow undulation. The machinery in which she sat hung over a flat piece

of rock, raised scarcely two inches above the surface of the water, which seemed unathomable, from the black mass of shadow that fell upon it. To her right she beheld a path: she hesitated not to quit her seat; and taking her torch in her left hand, to leave her right at liberty to assist her on her way, she proceeded along the path, rugged and dangerous from the bed of rock over which it wound, and its being wet and slippery from the spray and the returning waves, that after every retreat seemed to rise with an intention of overwhelming the path, which it sometimes washed over. Our heroine stopped for a moment to observe the movement of the water, and, perceiving it to be a retiring tide, went on without apprehension; and as she proceeded, rose with the path sufficiently above the stream to escape all annoyance from it.

At length, with a palpitating heart, she reached the termination of this rugged and fatiguing defile, where she discovered a low iron door, secured on the side next to her with several massy bars and chains. Rapidly Victoria advanced to the door: trembling expectation, with agonising fears and hopes,

that almost by their tumult rent her throbbing heart, now led her on to phrensied agitation. The energies of her mind lent her strength, and by the vehemence of her ardent exertions she was enabled to remove the ponderous barriers. Almost frantically she pushed in the door, her mind in that state of commotion which precluded all possibility of forming expectations. Intuitively she rushed through the door, when horror first seemed to animate perception: suddenly she shrunk back, she paused, she trembled, she rested against the door-case, and her eyes rolled wildly and wistfully around as if in search of some expected horror. In a moment more reason reassumed her influence, and Victoria saw that she was at the entrance of a miserable dungeon, the noxious damp of which had considerably diminished the brightness of her torch.

Eagerly she now gazed around, and could just distinguish in one corner of this direful place a human figure extended upon a truss of straw. Victoria's senses sickened, but she rushed forward to the wretched bed. The person was clad in the habit of a monk; he

lay motionless as death, and one arm was thrown across his face, totally concealing it. Wildly she grasped the hand that lay extended by his side, to feel if a corse deluded her tortured hope, when the scorching heat of malignant fever met her touch: almost shrieking with apprehension she pushed the arm away that obscured the face, and emphatically exclaiming "My Urbino! my life! my husband!" fell senseless by his side.

CHAP. XVII.

For about twenty minutes Victoria continued in a state of total insensibility; and many more elapsed before she was sufficiently recovered to perceive that in her fall she had extinguished the torch; and the horrid ideas this darkness inspired roused at once her senses to their fullest vigor. Hastily she searched out the torch, and opened her lantern to re-light it; when, between her own agitated haste, and the damp air admitted now more forcibly in, the candle also was extinguished, and she left in complete darkness, cut off from every succour, from every hope, but that of expiring by Urbino's side.

Dreadful, most dreadful, were now the sensations that agonised Victoria's mind for the fate of Urbino, who was evidently at the last extremity, and by immediate assistance only could a hope be cherished of saving him from speedy death; and that assistance

she had, by her own precipitance, fatally cut off. Her not returning would, of course, realise all the horrid ideas conceived of that terrible place, and effectually prevent the humanity of others from leading them after her; and without a light to guide her she could possibly have no hope of gaining the tube. But after a dreadful pause of deliberation she resolved to attempt it; and should she in her wanderings meet a watery grave, it would be in pursuit of succour for Urbino, who had braved all the horrors of a similar fate for her.

With some difficulty, from the excessive trepidation her dreadful situation inspired, she found out the door; and as she was about to pass through it, the sad idea that she was in all probability going from Urbino for ever arrested her steps. She returned; she searched out his wretched pallet—she sunk on her knees beside it—she grasped his parched hand, which gently returned her pressure.

"My G—d! he still retains his senses! He knows me!" she exclaimed; and bursting into tears, and imprinting a farewell kiss

upon his burning hand, she precipitately arose —"Adieu, my Urbino!" she continued, "I go in pursuit of succour for you. But, if I fail, we soon shall meet in a better world." Then again finding the door, she passed through it in a state of agonising solicitude scarcely to be conceived; and as she breathed a fervent supplication to Heaven for aid, a faint gleam of light shot across the water.

The transition from despair to that cheering hope this ray of light beamed with proved almost too much for her agitated mind to bear. Again the light gleamed; again it vanished; and Victoria saw that it had proceeded from beyond the dungeon, and not in the direction which those would come whose humanity might lead in pursuit of her. Again the light appeared much brighter and nearer than before, and, continuing in view, seemed advancing. Dreadfully agitated now by a thousand vague conjectures of alarm, Victoria hastened round a projection of rock where the dungeon door was situated, to learn if possible what this light could portend; when, to her utter dismay, she beheld slowly and cautiously advancing, along a path among

the rocks, a man of dark and diabolical appearance: his form resembled Garcias, and Victoria shook with terror.

Fear and uncertainty fixed Victoria to the spot; and in a moment more she saw another ruffian slowly pursuing the steps of the first. Direful were now her apprehensions. Suddenly he stopped, and entered into earnest conference. The man whose figure most alarmed our heroine drew a poniard from his bosom; and by the gesticulations of both, while they spoke in cautious whispers, she doubted not the theme of their discourse was most horrible, and her anticipating heart told her it was no less than the murder of Urbino. The men again began to move; the torch he bore gleamed full upon the face of the foremost; she saw that it was indeed Garcias, and her dismayed senses sickened with hopeless horror. More quickly they now advanced, and were only within a few paces of her, when, in wildest consternation, she retreated to the dungeon, resolving, since she too was clad in the habit of a monk, to throw herself over Urbino, to pass for him, and so to receive the death-blow, from Garcias, in his

stead. Before her trepidation could allow her to put this design in execution, Garcias and his companion reached the door; but upon seeing it open, they started, stopped, and pondered for a moment: then, with a tremendous oath, Garcias broke the dreadful silence, declaring "the Inquisition had discovered that prison, and cheated them of their victim."

"No," said his associate, in the voice of the vile Polydore, for it was indeed Vicenza —"no; yonder he lies motionless. I fancy death has anticipated us here, and spoiled our sport."

"That we shall soon see," returned Garcias, entering; "but be it as it may, he shall have this poniard in his d—d heart, for fear of accidents."

A deep groan from Urbino announced his existence; and a diabolical grin of sanguinary joy gleamed on the ruthless countenance of Garcias, as he rapidly advanced towards the pallet; when, just as he reached it, Victoria glided in between him and his devoted victim. Her cowl had fallen back in her distraction; the torch beamed full upon her face, which was pale and ghastly as the horrors of her

mind could make it: and the moment Garcias beheld her, the poniard fell from his uplifted hand, and uttering a loud cry of dismay he precipitately retreated in visible horror and consternation, while his amazed companion closely pursued his faltering steps.

Wondering what all this could mean, and almost doubting the evidence of her senses, Victoria gained the door, and there she waited in direful expectation of a dreadful solution. At length the reflexion of the retreating torch was lost to her view, and total darkness again reigned. She shuddered, she trembled, she feared now to leave Urbino: all, all, was cheerless despair. Insensibly she sunk upon her knees to pray for succour; when she suddenly beheld another gleam of light emanating along the path she had trod from the tube. A moment scarcely elapsed when she heard her own name repeated in a tone of agonised solicitude. The voice awakened a tumult in her mind of joyful sensations mingled with doubt and amazement. The light rapidly advanced; again she heard the voice. Its second sound was conviction.

Victoria started from her knees: she attempted to move forward, but her excessive agitation impeded her intention; she sunk against the rocks. In an instant more the arms of her brother encircled her, and the violence of her emotions threw over her faculties a momentary suspension.

The soothing voice, the fond endearments of Alphonso, in the moment of her recovery, softened the conflict into tenderness. Tears relieved her throbbing heart, and every wandering thought returned to Urbino. She saw conte Ariosto had not come alone to her, and in his companions she beheld the venerable Alberti and the faithful Diego. She reached out her hands in gratitude and kindness to them. She had not power to speak, but looking expressively at Diego, pointed to the dungeon.

Understanding her wish, Diego hurried into the prison of Urbino; and, on approaching the miserable bed, he started in amazement, and uttering an exclamation of joy and astonishment, sunk upon his knees, and, throwing down his torch, clasped Urbino in his arms in all the phrensied energy the sensa-

tions of his feeling heart inspired, on recognising in the wretched prisoner the youth he had been so firmly attached to—Theodore, the interesting child of old Teresa's affection, whom he had so long believed numbered with the dead, and whom in the disguise of Hippolyto, though so much with him, he never once suspected was him whom he ceased not to lament. Victoria instantly comprehending all that the emotions and exclamations of Diego proclaimed, broke from the supporting arms of her brother, and was in an instant by Diego's side.

"This then is Theodore, whom you so firmly loved!" said she; "and will you not then hasten, Diego, to snatch him from death?"

Diego started to his feet, and looking mournfully upon our heroine as he spoke, said in an accent of deep despair, "Snatch him from death! Ah! lady Victoria, is that in my power? The villains, the fiends, the monsters of iniquity, placed him here to perish; and we have, alas! only arrived to close his eyes!"

Victoria, in speechless agony, flung her-

self into the arms of her brother; who had, with Alberti, followed her into the dank cell.

"For the sake of Heaven, my beloved, my darling sister," said Alphonso tenderly, "moderate this excess of grief, and we will make every exertion that affection and humanity can inspire to save him."

The reverend Alberti now approached the bed, and, having taken the hand of Theodore, spoke comfort to the anguish of Victoria.

"This is not the pulse of death," he said, "although he certainly labours under the influence of a severe indisposition. But despair not, my child; since the assistance he has been by cruelty deprived of, may now, with the permission of Providence, restore him to health: and we ought to make no delay in conveying him to where he may instantly receive the necessary aid, since every fleeting moment must in his case be of importance."

Immediately was the opinion of Alberti attended to. Gently was Urbino raised from the truss of straw, (which but for the heroism of Victoria, and the singular interposition of

Providence, would have been his bed of death), and tenderly conte Ariosto and Diego carried him to the tube, preceded by Alberti and Victoria bearing torches.

As the machinery could only contain three persons at a time, it was determined that our heroine and Alberti should give place to Alphonso and Diego, who could better support the helpless Urbino in his ascent. But while they were placing the poor invalid securely in the chair, he had clasped one of Victoria's hands fast within his; and when she found it necessary to disengage herself from his grasp, he appeared so unwilling to resign her hand, that with a supplicating look to her attentive brother, she pleaded for not being separated from Urbino.

"Fear not, my Victoria," said the affectionate Alphonso; "you shall not be divided. I will resign my place to you; although I fear you can give but little assistance to this humane stranger in supporting your feeble charge."

"The strength which nature has denied me affection will supply me with," replied

Victoria, as she took her place in the machinery: "and my brother, who followed me to this place of supposed destruction, knows full well the mighty powers of affection."

The agitation of the suspended chain having announced to those above that they were wished to elevate the machinery, Victoria found herself returning safe and unhurt from a place where Providence alone could have inspired her with sufficient courage to go; her mind, however, not less agitated than it was in her descent, although very different were now the causes which actuated her emotions.

At length they safely reached the summit of the almost immeasurable tube; and the moment our heroine was beheld by the interested spectators, the most tumultuous shouts of joy were reiterated by all, which at almost any other period would have sensibly affected the feeling heart of Victoria: but now her agitated mind was absorpt by one idea only; and looking eagerly around for father Pierre, who was watching there in painful solicitude, "O save Urbino, holy

father!" she exclaimed, and instantly fell, in a state of total insensibility, into the arms of Octavia; who had been led by fear and anxiety from the bed-side of Sebastian to that spot of painful expectation.

CHAP. XVIII.

So severe had been the fatigues and so dreadful the conflicts Victoria's frame and mind had experienced, that the moment the great work she had undertaken was accomplished she sunk subdued into a bed of sickness, from whence she was unable to arise for many days—and not until the painful anxiety of her mind had been tranquillised by the solemn assurances of father Pierre, that he entertained not the smallest doubt of the perfect and rapid recovery of Urbino.

At the time Rosolia's letter from the château of comte de Montfort to conte Ariosto reached Andalusia, Alphonso was gone, accompanied by the anxious Alberti, upon the before-mentioned expedition against Great Britain. The expedition failed in its success, and the Spanish troops returned to Cadiz, where Rosolia's letter awaited conte Ariosto;

who, obtaining leave of absence, instantly set out for France, and arrived at St Marguerite's in a few days after our heroine's departure upon her arduous enterprise.

From the afflicted abbess Alphonso learned all that had befallen his beloved sister during her residence in Provence, with every necessary information relative to her present expedition into Spain, whither he immediately followed her, with his constant attendant Alberti, carrying with him a letter of introduction from the prior of St. Lewis to the subvicar of the holy office of Cadaques. He arrived at the holy office just as the last-mentioned convention were assembled, where he learned from father Pierre particular intelligence of his sister; and accompanied the inquisitors on their return to the castle, which was much earlier than had been expected, and where they found every individual in the utmost consternation and dismay. The long absence of Victoria had converted every horrid apprehension into reality in the minds of all; and, on the arrival of her anxious friends at the castle, both facts and fears were eagerly communicated.

In all the mental anguish his strong affection for his sister could inspire, Alphonso followed his guides to the south tower. The moment he beheld the dreadful tube, his senses sickened. He burst into tears; and, seizing a lighted torch, which the faithful official had held over the cylinder, to watch in anxious hope for the agitation of the chain, vaulted instantly into the iron chair (which had been just drawn up in despair); and, without the power of speaking, motioned to the bystanders to unroll the chain.

"Oh, take me with you, my son!" exclaimed the venerable Alberti, snatching a pistol from one of the soldier's belts: "you are the prop of my life—with you will I perish; for without you I cannot exist!"

Alberti was now assisted into the horrid machinery; for vain were the entreaties of Alphonso to him not to accompany him. The old man was firm to his purpose; and Alphonso, although as valiant a warrior as ever earned a laurel, was so sensibly affected, that he sobbed aloud upon the neck of his venerable and beloved friend.

The chain was now slowly unrolling, when

Diego (who had just entered the castle, and learned whither the temerity of Victoria had led her) suddenly arrested its progress.

"Conte Ariosto," he cried, "you are the last of an illustrious house; your life is of consequence, mine of none, but as it may prove useful to your family: give up then this dreadful enterprise, and let me only descend to seek my dear, my amiable young lady. Believe me, I have courage and attachment sufficient to undertake it; and if there is either fidelity or truth in man, I will restore lady Victoria to you, or perish in the attempt."

"You have my most lively gratitude, generous man," said Alphonso; "but it is my duty to seek my beloved sister; and no power on earth shall prevent my doing so whilst life and liberty are spared to me."

"It is *my* duty then to attend you, and to spill my last blood in the service of your family," returned Diego, as he leaped into the vacant bucket.

"As I know you not, nor the ties which bind you to my family, I cannot argue upon your duties," replied conte Ariosto; "but I

entreat you give up this generous intention. Two, with the aid of heaven, will be sufficient to rescue my sister; or, if we are doomed to fail in the attempt, two will surely be sufficient to perish."

"I will not survive the house of Ariosto," said Diego in a tone of firmness that convinced Alphonso further parley would be vain: and now provided by the officials with another torch, and sufficient arms and ammunition, they descended, attended by the prayers and good wishes of all who witnessed their enterprise; which terminated as we have already informed our reader.

In about an hour after Victoria had been consigned by indisposition to her bed, signora Farinelli and Rosolia were safely conducted by Thomas to the castle, where now were assembled so many individuals tenderly attached to our invalids, that our compassionate readers can little doubt that every possible care was taken of them which affection could inspire.

Sebastian was found to be in far the most critical situation of any of father Pierre's patients: for although his senses and powers

of articulation were soon restored, he had been so dreadfully reduced by famine, sorrow, and solicitude, that exhausted nature could scarcely sustain the conflict; and it required all the aid which skill could derive from medicine, all the care that tenderness could give, to feed the feeble embers of receding life, and fan them gently to reanimation: but the attention and solicitude of his friends were rewarded by his recovery; which, although very slow in its advances, was at length perfect.

The fever which the anguish of his mind and want of proper nutriment had thrown Urbino into, had passed its direful crisis; its virulence was gently abating, and his perception gradually returning, when Providence (through the medium of affection) led Victoria into his dreadful prison; so that when he was removed into purer air, when proper restoratives were administered, and every tender care bestowed upon him, aided by a certainty of being in the hands of his friends, with the still more salutary, though yet confused, perception of his adored Victoria having taken a tender and active part

in his preservation, he was soon enabled to throw off every trace of the disease, except an extreme weakness and lassitude, which not even the efforts of a strong and unimpaired constitution could enable him to conquer sufficiently to admit of his leaving his bed for many days after his fever had totally subsided; and during this confinement, Diego, at his earnest entreaty, gave him, as regularly as his medicines every hour, a full and circumstantial detail of all Diego knew of Victoria's encountering for his preservation.

At first Diego was compelled to convey his intelligence with great caution, as he found his communications too sensibly affected his hearer: but by degrees Urbino could hear all; would dwell with the most enraptured delight upon every incident, on every word and action, which were faithfully recounted to him: but never could a sentence upon the subject be repeated to him without his evincing the most violent emotions of gratitude; and although Diego's information would for a time destroy that state of tranquillity which Pierre considered so essential

to his recovery, it proved fortunately more efficacious than the good monk's medicines, by restoring to his long-tortured breast those hopes of happiness which the conduct of Victoria in their parting interview at St. Marguerite's had dissipated.

During Urbino's confinement conte Ariosto introduced himself to his acquaintance, and soon won his sincere regard. Of nearly the same age, with a marked similitude of manners and dispositions—equally versed in knowledge, and both indebted to nature for uncommon intellectual powers, and hearts that contained every virtue, they found a kind of congenial sympathy impel their affections to mingle quickly, and to cement into the strongest bonds of friendship; and perhaps the tender attachment each was known to feel for Victoria aided not a little in promoting their mutual regard. Soon their fast-growing friendship banished all reserve from their conversation. Theodore talked of Victoria, his hopes and wishes; Alphonso spoke of his sister, as the affianced wife of his friend; and often mentioned the plans he proposed for having their nuptials solemnised at the castle

of Palino, with all the proper forms and splendor their rank in life demanded, as soon as they were all able to reach Tuscany. It was during one of these interesting conversations upon arranging the plan of this intended union that Diego one day entered, and, as he delivered a billet to Urbino, said—

"From Donna Matilda, my lord, who wishes to know when you can allow her the happiness of seeing you?"

"Tell her," Urbino replied, "the very moment I am able to leave my chamber; for so great is my anxiety to see her, that my first visit shall be to her."

As Theodore finished this message, which he gave with marked emotion, he caught the wondering glances of Alphonso and Diego, and a deep blush instantly overspread his before pallid countenance.

Conte Ariosto was startled, felt uneasy at he scarcely knew what, and retired to a window to conceal his almost undefinable sensations: but soon recovering his composure, he turned suddenly round; he beheld Urbino, visibly affected, perusing the billet; he heard him heave deep sighs; he saw him brush

away a trickling tear; and when he ceased reading, he seemed so melancholy, so thoughtful, so abstracted, that Alphonso could no longer restrain his painful curiosity, but, availing himself of the privileges of friendship, asked Urbino, if Donna Matilda was nearly related to him? "Related! Oh, Heaven!" exclaimed Urbino, while his colour changed from crimson to the pale hue of death, and an expression partaking of horror and anguish became visible upon his intelligent countenance; but after a few moments of painful struggling to suppress his feelings, he proceeded in a faltering and grief-directed voice—

"Forgive, conte Ariosto, I entreat you, my not being now as explicit as friendship and my situation with your family so forcibly demand. From my earliest days I have seemed the child of mystery; and now when circumstances should call forth all the candor, all the ingenuousness of confidence and honour, cruel, cruel Mystery claims me more immediately for her own Bound by the guardian of my youth, the preserver of my life, to secresy and silence upon many

essential subjects relative to myself, until he should judge proper to withdraw his ambiguous interdict, I have never yet appeared to lady Victoria as that ingenuous character which I may say nature made me. I fondly thought, for I had been led to believe it, when last I saw my Victo—— your sister, that the moment was at hand when I might emerge from my mysterious character, and present myself before her as a being not unworthy of her esteem. But, alas! alas! my schemes of happiness are blighted. No more must I presume to look where my only hope of earthly happiness is centred; for that mysterious man, of whom I spoke, alas! is gone I know not whither—fled, I fear, with the wretches who inhabited this castle. With him I have lost every clue to myself; still am I bound in the dreadful chains of his mystery, and torn from every hope of bliss that life ever promised me."

Fathers Pierre and Anselmo now entered the chamber, and Alphonso availed himself of this opportunity of retiring to meditate upon all he had just remarked and heard. With every disposition to be pleased with

Urbino, with the most exalted opinion of his probity and honour, conte Ariosto was sensibly hurt at finding any thing in him that could awaken the shadow even of a suspicion to his disadvantage; but tremblingly alive to the honour, the delicacy of his sister, he felt uneasy, offended, mortified, nay almost jealous for her.

That Matilda's billet had worked a total revolution in Urbino's mind relative to his union with Victoria was too evident to be doubted; and how to account for her possessing such influence over his apparently amiable friend was a matter of much distress and perplexity to Alphonso, who wandered about the grounds, reflecting, reasoning, and reconsidering every circumstance, until in each point of view in which he could place Urbino's past conduct to Victoria he saw him so every way honourable, that he became convinced suspicion of his integrity was injustice, and he at length determined upon taking the earliest opportunity of speaking candidly to him upon the subject; and having thus resolved, he turned his steps to the chamber of his sister, where Matilda, the object who had so much

chagrined him, was paying her first visit to our heroine.

Matilda no sooner found herself rescued from the power and persecutions of Don Manuel, and assured of the perfect safety of Theodore and Sebastian, than her recovery from indisposition became rapid; and the moment she was able to undertake it, her gratitude led her to request permission to wait upon Victoria, who was still confined to her chamber, slow in her recovery; for her disease was mental, and nothing had been done to remove the barbed arrow which had destroyed her peace. From the moment the preservation of Urbino was effected, her mind, having no longer action to engage it and stimulate its energies, settled upon one hopeless subject. The fatigue and indisposition which had at first confined her to her bed was quite subsided; but still low and languid, she was unable to leave her chamber, and only obtained rest by powerful opiates which father Pierre found necessary to administer. The visit of Matilda was dreaded by her, but urbanity forbad her declining to receive it.

To our heroine's chamber then was Ma-

tilda conducted by Octavia; and in her Victoria beheld, as she expected, the female who had been dragged by ruffians into her chamber—but now appearing infinitely more beautiful than she had seemed upon that memorable night, for now the sweetest expression of sensibility had taken place of those which terror and despair had strongly delineated. Victoria, supported by the sympathising Ursuline, received Matilda; who, the moment she saw our heroine, rushed forward, and, catching her in her arms, burst into a violent passion of tears, sobbed convulsively upon her bosom, pressed her hands to her lips, her heart, and acted a thousand extravagances of enthusiasm before she could articulate a broken and almost unintelligible acknowledgment of her obligations to her.

Signora Farinelli, fearing the effect such an excess of unrestrained sensibility might have upon both Matilda and Victoria, called the former to order, with a degree of mild dignity that at once ensured obedience. Matilda took a seat: but, upon observing the wan and languid countenance of Victoria, she dissolved into a new flood of tears, and,

looking with the most tender expression upon her, sobbed out lamentations for the sad state humanity had reduced her to.

"I see, I see," she said, "you were infinitely too delicate to undergo all your compassionate heart led you through to save us from destruction. For the good Sebastian's preservation and my own I think I shall be able presently to thank you as I ought; but for Theodore's—oh! I can never, no, never, speak rationally, since for his welfare I would freely yield my life; since his safety and happiness are dearer, infinitely dearer to me than my own existence."

The attentive Ursuline saw Victoria's lip quiver; paler she could not become; but her bosom heaved convulsively; and Farinelli determined to check a warmth and impetuosity likely to inflict tortures upon the wounded heart of her beloved pupil.

"Donna Matilda," she said, "our amiable heroine is, as you know, but just recovering from a severe indisposition; and the scenes she has lately been engaged in have shattered her nerves most dreadfully. You cannot doubt her sensibility, and will not

wonder that I should fear your excess of feeling may too much affect her in this her delicate state, or that I should earnestly intreat a total silence at present upon subjects too oppressive to you both."

Matilda bowed acquiescence, while her eloquent eyes most plainly told she knew not that self-command which could enable her to talk upon one subject while her heart was filled with another. A painful pause for a moment ensued; but signora Bernini promptly relieved the embarrassment of all by breaking the awkward silence, and eloquently descanted upon nothings, until Victoria and Matilda regained their composure sufficiently to bear a part in conversation; when, in despite of the agonising reflexions the presence of Matilda awakened in the heart of our heroine, she found something like fascination leading her insensibly to be pleased with her—although she saw, or fancied she saw, a fire and impetuosity in Matilda's language and manner not perfectly congenial to a mind so truly feminine as her own.

Conte Ariosto, fearing to agitate the now susceptible nerves of his sister, ever entered

her chamber with much caution and gentleness: and now the little party assembled were so engaged by conversation and painful reflexion, that his entrance was unperceived until he stood before them; when Victoria hastened to announce him to Donna Matilda, on whom he looked with marked coldness and aversion — her unexpected appearance restoring to his mind every unpleasant reflexion he had been anxious to dismiss. Our heroine saw in Alphonso's manner something so unusual, that she felt alarm, and hastily demanded if conte Urbino was worse.

"Oh, no," Alphonso replied; "I left him wonderfully well, and in high spirits too, for we have been arranging every thing for the speedy ratification of your union."—The last sentence he pronounced with striking emphasis, and with his fine and penetrating eyes keenly fixed upon Matilda, whose countenance he saw rapidly undergo a variety of changes: he beheld in her trembling frame the most painful agitation, and in a moment more her senses fled, and her respiration quite was gone.

Victoria threw herself upon the bosom of

her beloved Farinelli and wept, since the cause of Matilda's fainting was too apparent to be doubted; and every former sad conviction was now more painfully impressed upon her bursting heart.

Every thing was done for the recovery of Matilda, who, the moment she could articulate, expressed an eager wish to return to her own chamber. In visible confusion she bade Victoria adieu, and was supported by Octavia and Rosolia to her own apartment.

CHAP. XIX.

The distraction of mind Matilda's swooning had thrown Alphonso into, and the confusion which succeeded, prevented his observation of its effect upon Victoria; but now more than ever convinced that something existed which threatened destruction to his beloved sister's peace, since her late proceedings had but too strongly evinced her tenderest affections being irrevocably placed upon conte Urbino, and trembling for the happiness of a being inexpressibly dear to him, he resolved instantly to demand an explanation from Urbino: he therefore hastily bent his impatient steps to the chamber of our hero, whom he found so sad, so apparently wretched, that his compassionate heart knew not how, in such a moment, to introduce a subject which he doubted not would augment his distress. They both sat silent for a considerable time, buried in painful musing: at length the fra-

ternal feelings of conte Ariosto conquering every other, he hastily arose from his seat and took the hand of Urbino.

"I know not," he said, "if this is the hand of a friend; but as I believe it, and fervently hope to find it such, I take it in amity, and trust you will excuse me if I give you one moment of mental pain. With a mind open and candid, a disposition governed by impetuosity, and a heart glowing with ardent wishes to find its favourable opinion deserved by you, I cannot longer bear to shelter these painful suspicions which circumstances have awakened. Conte Urbino, believe me, I would not for worlds attempt to penetrate these secrets you wish to withhold from me, did not the menaced happiness of a sister command me to it. I must, conte Urbino, exert every faculty of my mind, strain every fibre of my heart and frame, to preserve the peace, the fame, the delicacy of my sister unwounded; for Victoria di Modena has now no guardian, no protector in life but me:— she claims all my tenderness, my anxious care; for she is my sister, my friend, the idol of my affections, the pride of my heart, the

boast of our house, the most amiable among women."

"Oh! conte Ariosto, need I be told what lady Victoria di Modena is? On earth is there a being who has such cause as I to know the perfections of her matchless mind?" Urbino replied with a look and in a tone of enthusiastic admiration and deep despondence touchingly blended: "Victoria is the idol of my affections, conte; nor can the heart of her anxious brother beat with more fervent wishes for her happiness, or pant more ardently to secure her peace, her fame, her delicacy, than the suspected man before you."

"Then why," said Alphonso with quickness, "why do you awaken such injustice by your evident attachment to another? Why does Matilda possess sufficient influence to break off your alliance with our house? and why should she be agitated, even to swooning, upon hearing of your nuptials with my sister mentioned?"

Urbino shuddered.—"Matilda swoon upon hearing of my promised happiness!—Can it be possible?"

"By Heaven 'tis fact!" replied Alphonso:

"even but now has she recovered, and been conveyed from my sister's chamber to her own."

Urbino fell back in his chair, and for a moment his faculties seemed suspended: at length he recovered, and faintly said—

"If you have not been deceived, conte Ariosto, in the cause of Matilda's fainting, it has indeed given a fell blow to my happiness. Oh! dear, amiable, ill-fated Matilda! would to Heaven we had never, never met!"

A strong expression of horror overspread his countenance as he uttered this apostrophe. Alphonso earnestly observing him for a moment, while concern and indignation agitated his own breast, at length spoke with calm impressive dignity—

"Conte Urbino, farewell," said he. "I would not have troubled you with this interview, but that I had taken you to my heart, because I thought you well deserving a distinguished place there. I called you friend—I wished to call you brother—and would, with joy, have given you what I consider the highest prize that ever fell to the lot of man.

Judge then how I thought of you. But I am deceived. I have offended the dignity of my sister, by deigning to solicit any explanation of a conduct that so unequivocally unfolds itself: but the obligations the house of Ariosto is under to you for the preservation of its greatest treasure, the vows my sister was compelled by villany to give you, can only plead my excuse. May you be happy, conte Urbino, with her who claims you! Victoria di Modena claims a man of honour, and an undivided heart."

"Stay, I conjure you stay, conte Ariosto," exclaimed Urbino, rising from an easy chair, where pillows had supported his languid frame—"stay, I conjure you. Judge me not thus precipitately—condemn me not without fuller proof of guilt than mere conjecture. Believe, your suspicions are unjust, and that I am incapable of such conduct as you ascribe to me. In me conte Ariosto beholds a man of honour, who has presumed to offer lady Victoria an undivided heart—a heart where she only reigns, where no other woman ever raised such tender interest—a heart (although contemned by you) proud in conscious recti-

tude, and whilst it throbs with life, will beat with the most pure, most ardent, and unconquerable attachment to your sister." Urbino's feeble frame could no longer support exertion: he tottered and fell into his chair. Alphonso, subdued by his situation, flew to his assistance.

"Forgive me," he cried, "if I have injured you. What, what could I think from all I have——?"

"Think!" interrupted Urbino in a faltering voice, but with impressive solemnity, "think that I am an unfortunate but not an unworthy man, doomed at present, and perhaps for ever, to forego the dearest hopes of my heart, and compelled to wear the appearance of duplicity, from which my nature shrinks; and that the amiable unfortunate Matilda has no claims upon me but those of pure unalterable friendship."

At this moment a folded paper fell from above at the feet of Alphonso, who picked it up in surprise, and not knowing what so strange a circumstance could mean, opened it, and saw a few words written in such unsteady characters, that he recognised not a

man's writing; but supposing it from Matilda, still under the influence of her powerful agitation, and intended for Theodore, he felt painfully disconcerted, and without delay presented it, coldly saying—

"This aërial favour is, I believe, conte Urbino, intended for you."

Urbino looked on the paper; a flush of the most animated joy overspread his before pallid and agonised countenance; and in a voice tremulous with rapturous emotions he exclaimed, after a grateful apostrophe to Heaven—

"The moment of my acquittal is nearer than I could have dared to hope, my friend. This billet is from him whose disappearance caused me such misery and anguish. Soon, I now trust, shall I be absolved from my fatal promise—shall I learn the solution of many dreadful mysteries; and, assuming my native ingenuousness, at length be allowed to appear to the sensitive brother of Victoria with a fame as spotless as his own."

"And until then," said conte Ariosto, "we will not meet. To me reserve with

those I love is misery, and to suspect them death. I might prove but an insipid, nay, I fear, a sullen companion; imbibing prejudices and fancies which future years might not remove; and, with every trifle, feeding green and yellow monsters ungenial to peace and friendship. Whilst our hearts are thus barricadoed by that gloomy devil reserve we should prove but comfortless society to each other; but when this man of mystery, this cruel descendant of Harpocrates, unchains your tongue, and permits the secrets of your heart to flow into the bosom of friendship, summon me, and joyfully will I come."

"You are right," replied Urbino, "and we will not meet until I can dismantle from the black garb of mystery. The society of him who thinks he has reason to suspect my integrity would be tortures to me. Therefore adieu, conte Ariosto. When next I see you, you shall know me for a man of honour, and I trust we shall meet as friends and brothers."

"And then," said conte Ariosto with a sweet conciliating smile, which found its

way directly to the heart of Urbino, so strong was the resemblance it caused to Victoria, "and then, were we mussulmen, and that I had a hundred sisters, and every one a Victoria, I would give them all to you." And now, with a cordial and affectionate shake by the hand, the two friends parted.

Self-banished from Urbino, Alphonso now dedicated more of his time to Sebastian, who ever expressed anxiety for and pleasure in his visits: but in the apartments of Victoria he spent the chief part of his hours, affectionately attending her, beguiling her into taking food, playfully feeding her, reading to her, and striving to enliven her but too apparent sadness by the uncommon cheerfulness of his disposition.

In the chamber of Victoria was Matilda too almost constantly to be found; and to emulate Alphonso in his tender care of his interesting sister, seemed this grateful and lovely young woman's anxious study. She would sweetly sing to her; draw in the most burlesque groupes all the grotesque and motley figures in the castle; tell her, with infinite humour and propriety, curious and entertain-

ing anecdotes of the convent she had been educated in; watch every look of Victoria to anticipate her wishes, and do her some little act of attentive kindness. And yet Matilda was the detestation of conte Ariosto; scarcely could he command the natural urbanity of his heart, or the easy spontaneous politeness his intuitive feelings and the polish of high life inspired, to treat her with even that common civility which, as a woman, she claimed.

This extraordinary conduct in her beloved brother did not escape the observation of Victoria, who, shocked and grieved, anxiously sought for the cause, and was not slow in assigning one. From her attentive scrutiny, she learned that Matilda keenly felt the uncourteous conduct of Alphonso, without discovering any resentment, but with patient mildness chased away the starting tear, and suppressed the convulsive sigh it ever occasioned, whilst in no other part of her conduct did she evince a similar meekness of spirit and forbearance; that whenever the name of Urbino was mentioned the eyes of Alphonso were invariably fixed, in a scrutinising gaze,

upon the blushing face of Matilda, overwhelming her with a painful degree of confusion she ever vainly endeavoured to conceal; that her vivacity, at first so conspicuous, was gradually forsaking her, her appetite fast declining, and each day her appearance betraying the new inroads of inquietude. By all this Victoria was convinced of Alphonso's being in the secret of Matilda's attachment to Theodore, and that she was painfully conscious of his being so.

To remain then longer in the castle, Victoria now considered as cruelty and injustice to the wronged Matilda, and reprehensible in every point of view; she determined at once to strain every faculty of mind and frame to enable her to pursue that path rectitude had pointed out to her: and now, having a new project to occupy her thoughts, or at least to detach them in some degree from the misery of inaction, her languor seemed hourly to decrease, and every moment her strength appeared augmenting.

Alphonso was delighted by this auspicious change in his beloved sister; and expressing his feelings upon it to her, she informed him

"that in a very few days she hoped to be sufficiently recovered to attempt a return to St. Marguerite's." Alphonso was rejoiced: he had long wished her removed from the castle, which for many reasons he considered an improper situation for her; and he was now impatient at being so long unsummoned by Urbino; of whom, in spite of every effort of partiality, suspicions were once more arising. Matilda, who was present, appeared sensibly affected at Victoria's intention, and after a painful pause, in which she had been endeavouring to suppress her feelings, mournfully said--

"Misfortune has too surely marked me for her own; or I should not so soon be deprived of that society I have long been taught to wish for and to prize; and now, when experience has made me know how to appreciate its value, how keenly shall I feel its loss! But, lady Victoria, when you and Theodore are united, surrounded by friends, encompassed by happiness, by fortune's sweetest smiles, you will not, I trust, forget me; and when a child of sorrow shall

cross your path, bestow one pitying sigh for the misfortunes of the forlorn deserted outcast, the still grateful though wretched Matilda." A flood of long-suppressed tears now burst from confinement; bitterly Matilda wept, and Victoria was dreadfully affected.

"Ah! lady Victoria," said Matilda, hastily wiping her tears away, and striving with all her power to regain her firmness, "I beg a thousand pardons for thus intruding my sorrows upon you. I have been long accustomed to the pangs of misfortune, and should by this time know better how to bear them." She paused a moment, and then, looking beseechingly at Victoria, continued, "Oh! that I dare ask you to take me with you! This will be an awkward shelter for me when you are gone. No friend then left but Theodore, and he only for a short time; for when he is able to travel, of course he will hasten after you: and beside, were he to remain here, the world might think him an improper guardian for me; though I well know he would do every thing that

honour and humanity could inspire to save me from injury and sorrow. Signior Sebastian's connexions will call him far from hence; my guardian is gone, I fear me, for ever; and I shall then have no one here to—" The articulation of Matilda was painfully arrested; but with a determined effort of fortitude she hemmed away the feelings that arose almost to choke her, and she continued—

"The abbess of St. Marguerite's, I have heard you say, lady Victoria, is an estimable woman; and perhaps hereafter her humanity might be prevailed upon to admit me into her house. Yet how can I hope it? for, should my guardian never return—" Terrified at the idea she had thus awakened, Matilda paused, turned pale, and trembled.

Alphonso, not wishing that Matilda should become the companion of his sister until every doubt and suspicion respecting her should be removed, eagerly interrupted Victoria, who was about to offer her an immediate asylum in her protection.

"But, donna Matilda, although your

guardian may never return, you must surely have some other connexions in Spain, who, although not perhaps personally known to you, would be happy, upon your applying to them, to protect you? Why not retire immediately amongst your friends in the convent where you were educated? Why banish yourself from your family and connexions? Why wish to desert your native country?"

"Conte Ariosto," replied Matilda in a tone of the most touching sadness, "I have no friends, no connexions, no country. I know not the spot upon the surface of this globe which I can claim as the place of my nativity; nor is there a being upon earth that I know of to whom I can raise my supplicating hands, and say, "I belong to you—you have a right to shelter me." And with a look of the most piteous anguish she quitted her seat, and precipitately left the room, with a glow of wounded pride giving still greater interest to her lovely countenance, leaving both her auditors sensibly affected. And from that hour the conduct of Alphonso underwent a

total revolution towards her; from that hour it became, like his manner to his sick sister, gentle, conciliating, attentive, and kind; solicitous to please, and fearing to give pain. Yet still the Matilda who threatened destruction to his sister's happiness was his aversion; but she was the child of misfortune, and he held her feelings sacred, while in conjunction with Victoria he determined to protect her.

Both brother and sister had powerful motives for not wishing Matilda, at this period, to be the companion of Victoria. Alphonso's we have already stated. Our heroine's were all that delicacy and generosity inspired, relative to her own situation, and Matilda's hopes of regaining the estranged affections of Urbino. But each concealed their reasons from the other; while, in concert, they determined to procure an immediate asylum for Matilda in the convent where she had been educated; to make it signora Bernini's interest to remain with her as long as it should be found necessary; and at a future period, if she found no other more eligible protectors, to remove her to St. Marguerite's, or where

ever she might then wish to go. Octavia joyfully accepted their advantageous proposals; and when their intentions were delicately made known to Matilda, she appeared almost wild with gratitude and joy.

CHAP. XX.

ARRANGEMENTS were now rapidly making for Victoria's journey back to France, while each passing moment taught her more and more anxiety to be gone. She heard that conte Urbino was so much recovered as to be able to quit his chamber and visit Sebastian; that he had frequent meetings with Matilda, although he had not made a single effort to obtain an interview with her. A formal message of inquiry after her health, delivered by Diego, or the now happy Teresa, morning and evening, was all the notice he seemed now to bestow upon her; and even the little tender remembrances conveyed by Pierre and her brother from him to her had some time ceased to be repeated. Her heart was agonised, while reason told her that the wishes rectitude ought firmly to inspire were realising. Urbino was awakening from infatuation to justice and virtue. Sadly she

sighed acquiescence, while something like mortified pride, mingled with better feelings, urged her to depart.

Victoria doubted nothing of Alphonso's friendship, his judgment, or his delicacy; but fearing the impetuosity of his ardent temper, she forbore to impart to him the misery that oppressed her: but with the advice of Farinelli, she had reposed her full confidence in her old respected friend, the good and wise Alberti, who, a participator also in Alphonso's suspicions, applauded her laudable resolutions, and strengthened her in them by his councils and his piety.

At length, the day preceding that appointed for our heroine's departure from the castle arrived—a day in which she found herself doomed to sustain one of the most severe and heart-rending trials she had ever experienced. She had informed Alberti and Ursuline, that, in her researches in the castle for her friends, a packet for conte di Urbino had been confided to her care, with awful and impressive injunctions to be herself the deliverer of it; and although she considered the solemn request of a dying man too sacred to be disre-

garded, yet, situated as she was, she thought it could be no crime to delegate the important trust to her brother, who would execute it faithfully, and who at the same time could, as her proper guardian, convey her rejection of conte di Urbino to him with more propriety than, in her delicate situation with him, she could possibly do. But Alberti, knowing the fermentation of Alphonso's ardent mind relative to Urbino and Matilda, feared the most fatal consequences from his interference, and therefore represented to Victoria, "that she was under the absolute necessity, from the awful nature of her implied promise to a dying man, of being herself the deliverer of the important packet; and owing such obligations as she did to conte di Urbino, he might consider it ungrateful to employ another, even a brother, in a business of so delicate, so mortifying a nature as her rejection of him."

Victoria thought Alberti too fastidious, but with a mournful sigh acquiesced in his, to her terrible, decree. Well she knew what an agonising trial it would prove to her; but yet she hoped the power who actuated

her conduct would sustain her through it. An interview with Urbino was therefore requested; and to the moment he was in Sebastian's study, the place appointed for this distressing meeting. Victoria heard him in the room some moments before she could collect sufficient firmness to appear to him. At length she entered from her own chamber, pale and trembling with the dreadful agitation of her mind, supported by the venerable Ursuline, who was to be the sole witness of their parting interview.

Victoria's eyes were fixed upon the floor. She could not raise them to look upon Urbino, whom she was about to give up for ever: but ere she was aware of his intention he was at her feet, attempting to speak of his obligations to her. But soon he found acute feeling the destroyer of eloquence, and he was at length compelled to a compliance with the entreaties of our heroine, to speak not upon a subject so oppressive to her, nor thus to appreciate so far beyond its merit the little, gratitude had led her to attempt for him to whom she owed more than life.

They all at last were seated. Urbino was

silent, from wanting power to speak. A painful and embarrassing pause ensued, which, after several unsuccessful efforts, was broken, in a low and tremulous voice, by Victoria.

"Conte Urbino," she said, "I leave this castle to-morrow, on my return to St. Marguerite's, and therefore requested this interview, that I might deliver into your hands a sacred deposit. In my researches through this castle, Providence directed my footsteps to the couch of a dying man, who in the last moments of his life confided this packet to my care, with a solemn request to preserve it from the knowledge of every being until I could myself deliver it into your own hand. This important commission I should have sooner executed, but an opportunity was not given to me." Victoria presented the packet; and the moment Urbino's eyes glanced over the superscription, the striking melancholy of his dejected countenance gave place to the most animated expression of joy, amazement, and rapture.

"O my Victoria!" he exclaimed, in a voice tremulous from excess of emotion, as

he pressed with lively fervor to his lips the hand which gracefully gave up the important trust to him, "O my Victoria! Heaven has decreed you to be every way my preserver. You have rescued me from a dreadful death—you restore to me my hopes of happiness—for in this packet is, I doubt not, contained my fate—a solution of those mysteries which so long, so dreadfully have encompassed me. It will announce to me who I am, and what are my pretensions—it will restore me to the friendship of conte Ariosto—and, oh rapture! it will, I trust, allow me to plead my dearest hopes with you!" He paused for a moment, and then proceeded: "Permit my now retiring, lady Victoria, that I may learn the wondrous and important secrets this reveals—until I recover from the wild, the painfully rapturous emotions it has awakened: then will I see conte Ariosto; then, sanctioned by him, will I present myself before you what I really am, and in my own character plead with Victoria for my happiness."

Victoria's soul was wrung with anguish: but though her heart might bleed, her senses sicken, she would not falter in her duty.

Another interview she knew would be death to her: it was now but one more agonising effort, and all would be over, and her happiness gone for ever.

"Stay, conte di Urbino," she said, "one moment stay, and all will be terminated." She gasped for breath to proceed; her lips quivered, her before flushed cheek changed to the pallid hue of death. Tears, that would no longer be restrained, rolled down the cheeks of Ursuline. Urbino caught all the horrors of alarm: the chill of fear pervaded his whole frame, his swelling heart almost fluttered from its bounds, and he listened in breathless apprehension. She at length proceeded:—

"With difficulty can I repress emotions that seem to upbraid me with ingratitude: but let not my preserver condemn me for the painfully ungracious effort I am doomed to make. Conte di Urbino"—The articulation of Victoria was now quick, low, and tremulous. "Conte di Urbino, I have well-consulted the feelings of my heart; and although I find there, gratitude, admiration, and esteem, in the most exalted degree for

you, I, alas! also find, that an union with you could not bestow happiness upon me."

For many moments Theodore was unable to articulate; amazement, grief, and dismay convulsed his frame, and chained up all his faculties. At length he spoke, and in a tone so expressive of his misery, that the venerable Farinelli sobbed aloud, and the power which rectitude possessed over our heroine's mind alone preserved her from betraying to him the real situation of her heart.

"Lady Victoria," he said, "am I then indeed a wretch rejected by you, deprived at once of every ray of happiness that life e'er promised me? Oh! why, why did you then enter my dungeon, to snatch me from certain and immediate death, to doom me thus to a lingering life of torture?" Tears now gushed from his eyes, and in an agony of grief his head sunk upon the elbow of the couch on which he rested. A half-suppressed sob of Victoria's reached his ears, and roused at once his fortitude; he instantly arose from his seat, and in a graceful attitude of retreat he gently, sadly said—

"Forgive, I entreat, my thus distressing

you. I wish not pity to effect for me what affection has denied me. I have no right to complain, still less to upbraid you. My self-love flattered me into destructive delusions, and perhaps I am justly punished for my presumption. But indeed I thought," and his voice fell to a cadence of such touching pathos, it thrilled to Victoria's very soul, "I thought, in the fleeting moments of receding life, when extended upon my bed of straw within my wretched cell, I thought a voice (whose tones my heart can never, never cease to vibrate) breathed one short sentence, which called me back to life, to hope, to happiness. It sounded sweetly round my bed of sickness: it nursed, it soothed, it cherished me. It led me back to health:—and now, the most fascinating form that fancy ever pourtrayed a vision in, dissolves, and leaves me wretched!"

Victoria threw herself into the arms of Ursuline, and sobbed upon the bosom of her venerable friend. Urbino took her trembling hand.

"Why, oh! why, lady Victoria," said he, "if my wretchedness can thus affect you,

why do you banish me from you, and consign me thus to misery? But I see, I know too well the cause. You believe me unworthy. Some strange suspicion of my honour has found an entrance into your ingenuous bosom. Even on that—oh! how I vainly thought auspicious day your faithless guardian gave you to me, I saw some dreadful doubts of my rectitude stole into your mind; and its visible effects, as we drove from the château of de Montfort, gave a mortal blow to my peace; and certainly, most certainly, since you suspect my integrity, you ought to reject me. The house of Ariosto claims alliance with spotless honour—Victoria di Modena with every virtue under heaven."

"Oh! no, no, conte di Urbino," replied our dreadfully agitated heroine, summoning, with all the forces of her mind, sufficient fortitude to proceed in this agonising conflict, "I doubt not your honour; I believe you as perfectly amiable as my own brother, but I cannot be your wife. Farewell, then, my highly-esteemed friend; and when you visit Alphonso in Tuscany, I hope—I trust—I shall see you happy—as Heaven knows I

wish you." She arose to depart. Urbino looked mournfully at her—

"Happy!" he repeated in a tone of deep despair: "No, Victoria, never, never."—Leaning upon the arm of signora Farinelli, Victoria with tremulous steps moved towards her chamber. Urbino, at once deprived of fortitude, darted after her, and grasped her hand.

"Oh stay, Victoria, stay!" he exclaimed, in the broken voice of anguish—"I only ask, my life, my love, my preserver, my wife—I only ask one moment's stay ere you rob me of peace for ever."

Victoria could no longer sustain the heart-rending conflict; but, breaking from his convulsed grasp, rushed into her chamber, closed the door, and, sinking upon her knees, fervently implored Heaven to spare her senses to her through the mental sufferings she was doomed to, and to grant her resignation to bear her fate with firmness. And in about two hours after this severe trial, when conte Ariosto, unacquainted with the occurrences of the morning, entered his sister's chamber,

and saw the mournful serenity of Victoria's countenance, mingled with an expression of celestial sweetness so affecting, he could scarcely withstand the impulse of folding her in his arms, and weeping over her, through sympathy awakened for he knew not what.

END OF VOL. III.

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